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A HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR  
IN FOUR VOLUMES  
VOLUME I

Ἰβρις γὰρ ἐξανθοῦσ' ἐκάρπωσε στάχυν  
Ἄτης ὄθεν πάγκλαυτον ἐξαμῆ θέρος.

ÆSCHYLUS, *Persæ*, 812-13.

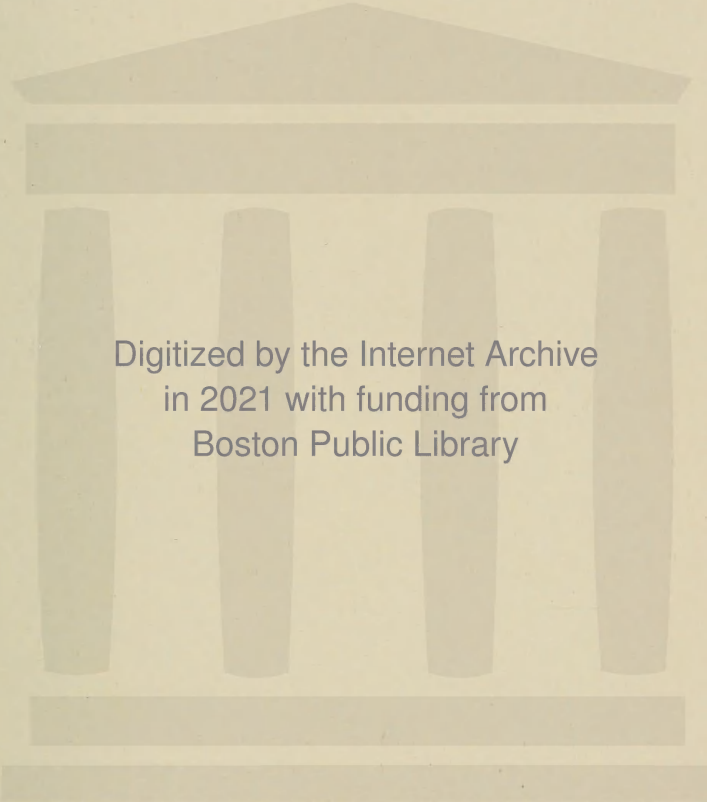
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“There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war.”—*Ecclesiastes* viii. 8.

---

“Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both Angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.”—RICHARD HOOKER, *Ecclesiastical Polity*.





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# A HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

BY  
JOHN BUCHAN

VOLUME I

WITH INTRODUCTION BY  
Major-General J. G. HARBORD, U.S.A.



*Field-Marshal Ferdinand Foch*  
*From a painting by Sir William Orpen, R.A.*

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.  
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND PARIS





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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
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THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.  
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TO  
THOMAS ARTHUR NELSON  
CAPTAIN  
LOTHIANS AND BORDER HORSE  
WHO FELL AT ARRAS  
ON EASTER MONDAY, 1917

*Heu quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam  
tui meminisse!*





## PREFACE.

THIS work in its original form appeared in twenty-four volumes between February 1915 and July 1919, and was therefore written and published for the most part during the progress of the campaign. Begun as an experiment to pass the time during a period of enforced inaction, its large sales and the evidence forthcoming that it met a certain need induced me to continue it as a duty, and the bulk of it was written in the scanty leisure which I could snatch from service abroad and at home. Any narrative produced under such conditions must bristle with imperfections. It will contain many errors of fact. The writer cannot stage his drama or prepare the reader for a sudden change by a gradual revelation of its causes. His work must have something of the apparent inconsequence of real life. He records one month a sanguine mood and a hopeful forecast; three months later he will tell of depression and of expectations belied. He must set out interim judgments, and presently recant them.

After much reflection I decided to revise—and largely rewrite—the book in order to give it perspective and a juster scale, and I was moved to this decision by my view of the value of contemporary history. Sir Walter Raleigh, in the preface to his *History of the World*, excuses himself for not writing the story of his own times, which (he says) might have been more pleasing to the reader, on the ground that “whosoever in writing a moderne Historie shall follow truth too neare the heeles, it may happily strike out his teeth.” To Napoleon, on the contrary, it seemed that contemporary history was the surest. “One can say what occurred one year after an event as well as a hundred years. It is more likely to be true, because the reader can judge by his own knowledge.” Between two such opinions reason would seem

to decide for the second. Till a few hundred years ago historians almost exclusively chronicled events of which they had been spectators. The greatest of all wrote what was in the strictest sense of the word contemporary history. Thucydides played his part in the first stages of the Peloponnesian War with the resolution of becoming its chronicler, and he saw the ebb and flow of its tides, not as political mutations, but as moments in the larger process of Hellenic destiny. With such a writer, living in the surge of contemporary passions, and yet with an eye abstracted and ranging over a wide expanse of action and thought, no reconstructor of forgotten ages from books and archives can hope to vie. For the scholar in such a case competes with the creator, the writer of history with one who was also its maker; and the dullest must thrill when in the tale of the struggle for Amphipolis the opponent of Brasidas is revealed as Thucydides, son of Olorus, ὃς τὰδε ξυνέγραψεν.

There are special and peculiar reasons why the future historian who essays to tell the whole tale of the Great War will find himself at a disadvantage. The mass of material will be so huge that even a new Gibbon or a second Ranke, grappling with it in many libraries, will find himself overburdened. Some principles of interpretation he will need, and will no doubt devise, but the odds are that such principles will be academic and artificial. The details of this or that battle may be clearer in the future when war diaries and personal memoirs have multiplied, but I believe that the main features of the war can be more accurately seen and more truly judged by those who lived through it than by a scholar writing after the lapse of half a century. The men of our own day, from the mere fact of having taken part in the struggle, are already provided with a perspective—a perspective more just, I think, than any which the later historian, working only from documents, is likely to discover. Again, in a contest of whole peoples psychology must be a matter of prime importance; mutations of opinion and the ups and downs of popular moods are themselves weighty historical facts, as much as a battle or a state paper; and who is to assess them truly if not those who themselves felt



the glow of hope and the pain of disillusion? Lastly, the contemporary has, perhaps, a more vivid sense of the great drama if he has appeared on the stage, were it only as one of a crowd of citizens in the background. I cannot boast with Raleigh that I have been "permitted to draw water as neare the Well-Head as another"; but for much of the war I was within a modest distance of the springs. My duties, first as a War Correspondent and then as an Intelligence officer, gave me some knowledge of the Western Front; and later, in my work as Director of Information, I was compelled to follow closely events in every theatre of war, and for the purposes of propaganda to make a study of political reactions and popular opinion in many countries.

My aim has been to write a clear narrative of one of the greatest epochs in history, showing not only the changing tides of battle, but the intricate political, economic, and social transformations which were involved in a strife not of armies but of peoples. I have tried—with what success it is for others to judge—to give my story something of the movement and colour which it deserves, and to avoid the formlessness of a mere compilation. The book is meant to be history on a large scale, printed as it were in capital type, and to keep the proportions I have omitted much detail of great interest which can be found in works dealing with individual military and naval units, limited battle-grounds, and special spheres of national effort. But in one respect I am conscious that I have departed from a just proportion. The book is written in English, and intended primarily to be read by the writer's countrymen. Hence the part played by Britain has been described more fully than that of the other belligerents, though I trust this prominence deliberately given to British doings does not appear in my general criticisms and judgments. One point I would emphasize. No confidences have been betrayed, no privileges have been claimed or used, no matter included which cannot be fairly regarded as public property. The book is indeed the opposite of an official history. It does not pretend to lay open sealed archives; it is a personal not a professional record, a chronicle of individual observation, private study, personal assessments. In a work so full

of details there must inevitably be mistakes, but I have striven earnestly to tell the truth, so far as I could ascertain it, free from bias or petulance or passion. The story is too noble a one to be marred by any "vileinye of hate."

With regard to the method followed: The pages are not "documented," for to quote authorities would have doubled the size of the volumes. References to sources are usually given only when some point is still in dispute. In the early part, when the British Army was small, brigades and even battalions are mentioned; in the later, the normal unit is the division and, in most chapters, the corps. No fixed principle has been followed in spelling foreign names; I have used the forms in which they are most likely to be familiar to the general reader. I have had the advantage of the knowledge and advice of a very great number of soldiers, sailors, and civilians among nearly all the belligerent nations, some of whom have been so kind as to read my proofs. To these, my friends, I offer my warmest gratitude, and I only refrain from the pleasure of writing their names because I have sometimes had the temerity to differ from their views, and I hesitate to involve distinguished professional men in any responsibility for a work which in every part represents an independent exercise of my own judgment. To one helper, however, I must make special acknowledgment. Mr. Hilliard Atteridge from the late months of 1914 has assisted me in analyzing reports, in verifying references, in correcting proofs, and especially in the preparation of the maps. But for his most capable and unwearying aid the book in its original form could not have been written.

J. B.

ELSFIELD MANOR, OXON.

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## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION.

WHETHER history is better written by one who has been a participant, or at least a contemporary of the great actors in the drama he portrays, or by the careful disciple of historical research working when time has lent distance and prejudice no longer obscures the vision, must be decided by each student for himself. Much that can be said by the participator, of great events which he saw and of which he was a part, the personal bearing of individuals, the vivid impressions that come only to the eye-witness, the psychology of the times and peoples and the waves of patriotic emotion, may be missed by the scholar writing ever so carefully after the ultimate survivor has told his tale for the last time. Nor can the scholar find his facts if every writer with personal knowledge delays his record for time's perspective and the cooling of passion. Some contemporary record must constitute the sources from which the future historian must draw his materials. The generations between the events and the leisurely written study of the scholar are themselves entitled to some well presented statement of the history their fathers made.

That some perspective is necessary is beyond doubt. The relation of events to one another, of cause to effect, is not at once evident. This is particularly true in a history of modern war. The horizon of any one man in a modern battle is very limited. Personal leadership by general officers no longer has a place on the field, and high commanders cannot see wavering lines or the approach of assaulting columns. In the Great War, with the tremendous range of its guns and rifles, the length of its battle-lines, and the ossified character of its engagements between the First Marne and the great Allied Offensive of July, 1918, even division commanders knew little of what happened except in their own contracted sectors. The effects of a



success or reverse on a limited front as related to the whole plan they could not know. That a local reverse might yet contribute to a general success by containing the enemy at a vital point could not be known to the participants at the time. Such effects are known only by the commanders-in-chief and their confidential staffs. The flood of regimental and divisional histories is useful in recording the participation of units as seen by themselves, and when checked against each other and against other records will constitute a valuable source for the future historian. The very controversies they arouse will serve in time to clear doubtful points.

Those who believe that more reliable history is written some years after the occurrences point to the period in the eighties when the best accounts of our Civil War appeared, written by the leaders themselves, and there was an accord between historians which would have been impossible in the late sixties. Our Civil War chiefs were young men. In the recent struggle our country had perhaps half a dozen general officers under forty years of age; in the Civil War there were scarcely a greater number who were beyond that age. Grant, Meade, Thomas and Sherman were in the forties. Lee was past fifty. Sheridan was not thirty-five when the war ended; Merritt, Custer, Miles, Wilson, Fitzhugh Lee, and Mackenzie were under thirty. Stuart and McPherson died at thirty-three. But Joffre, Foch, French, and the Grand Duke Nicholas were in the sixties when the Great War began, Cadorna was sixty-five, and Hindenburg was seventy. Pétain, Haig, and Pershing were in the late fifties.

It is important to the American participation in the Great War that such contemporaneous accounts as faithfully recite its story be tagged, as it were, by those with first-hand knowledge, as reliable sources for the future historian. It is no secret that our principal Allies opposed the formation of an American Army as such, and pleaded with great pertinacity that our soldiers might be amalgamated in British and French units, and later, yielding little by little, that our battalions should be brigaded under French

and British commanders. One of the accomplishments for which his country owes him most, is the firmness with which General Pershing successfully withstood this fallacious military insistence of our Allies, with no doubt some loss of popularity with their chiefs, and at no small risk to his own fortunes when he took issue with policies to which the great Allied Prime Ministers were committed. As late as September, 1918, just after his success at St. Mihiel, Pershing had to resist pressure from General Foch to break up his American Army and disperse its divisions to various Allied commands. On November 5th, less than a week before the Armistice he was asked to distribute six of his victorious divisions among the French in Lorraine, though their replacement at an early date was promised him. A man less steadfast in his convictions and less capable of presenting them in convincing form to his home government, would have been more acceptable to the venerable French Premier than Pershing, and stormy old Clemenceau behind a French Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, was the most powerful influence on the Allied side in the autumn of 1918. Marshal Foch, great soldier though he is, surrounded himself with only a French staff, and unquestionably obeyed Clemenceau as a minister on whose pleasure his tenure of command depended. The policies of France, to say the least, never suffered by virtue of the chief Allied command being exercised by a Frenchman. A recent French writer, discussing the reasons why the Armistice was concluded at a time when many military men thought it premature, no doubt reflects in some measure French opinion of the time when he says that the Americans were coming to France at the rate of three hundred thousand per month, in such numbers "as to threaten the unity of command." Such facts may unconsciously color the official reports of the time, and they certainly point to the importance of keeping the record straight.

Unhappily the personal statements of the great chiefs must be made soon, if at all. Certain ones for better or for worse have already been placed in the archives. Others

will probably never be recorded. Lord Haig has sealed his papers to the British Museum for use after his death. The Germans von Hindenburg and von Ludendorff have written from the enemy side, but their accounts, however accurate, are in the nature of self-vindication. The Grand Duke Nicholas, an exile from his wretched country, will hardly write his memoirs and his activities were remote from the Western Front. Diaz and Badoglio will use a tongue to which our public is a stranger. Lord French, in his book *1914*, deals only with the earlier events of the War, and in such manner as to throw doubt on the accuracy of his memory. Marshal Foch is understood to be compiling his notes, but Marshal Joffre in serene old age is probably content to trust to his reports of the time. Marshal Pétain and our own General Pershing, now in their sixties, confident, apparently, in the expectation of long life, are devoting themselves to other activities. The lamented General James W. McAndrew, Chief of Staff of the American Expeditionary Forces during our major operations in France, died without committing his observations to writing. In the field of political relations between the Allied Governments, which so powerfully influenced military events, the records are still largely confidential and not yet accessible to the historical student. With old age now weighing upon the great Clemenceau, with former President Wilson an invalid, and with Mr. Lloyd George still battling in the political arena with the lengthening shadows behind him, there seems little prospect that the stories of these men, so necessary to the comprehensive history of the Great War, will ever be told.

This History of the Great War by John Buchan is one on which in my opinion the future historian, struggling with the mass of historical matter yet to be written, may rely. Trained at Glasgow University and at Oxford, the author was a Barrister of the Middle Temple as early as 1901. To his legal training and experience he added two years as Private Secretary to Lord Milner when the latter was High Commissioner in South Africa after the Boer War. As a

newspaper correspondent on the Western Front in the early days of the War, and later as a Lieutenant-Colonel serving in the Intelligence Section of the General Staff of the British Expeditionary Forces in France, he had exceptional opportunities for observation. His service as Director of Information for his government gave him equal opportunity to keep in touch with activities on all Allied fronts during the last two years of the War. Colonel Buchan has either read very widely from the standpoint of the military student or his generous acknowledgement, in his preface, of his indebtedness to his friends covers the counsel of some well-informed professional soldiers. The literary style of his work is charming, its movement and color are satisfying, and it is rich, even fascinating, in historical allusion and comparison.

In the passing of the generations it has sometimes happened that "a common soldier, a child, a girl at the door of an inn, have changed the face of fortune and almost of Nature" (Burke). That in the twentieth century the murder of a middle-aged mediocre prince inspecting in an obscure city of the Balkans, even though he were the heir to an empire, could mark one of the fateful moments of all history, and precipitate the greatest of wars, throws doubt on the pretensions of our age. The dramatic events of that June morning at Serajevo brought to a head the antagonism between Slav and Teuton, awoke the ambitions and the fears of every Power in Europe, and slowed down the progress of civilization to a rate which cannot yet be calculated. The causes of the struggle into which the murder of the Austrian heir now plunged half the world had been sown and had fructified through many years.

In a generally happy and comfortable world, in an age of philanthropy, of scientific development entwined with a commerce that encircled the globe, mankind had abandoned itself to the lure of luxury and a hectic hunt for wealth. The luxury of one class is usually developed at the expense of others, and the second decade of the twentieth century heard much of class-consciousness, of social democracy and



the proletariat. The ambitions of these new forces, largely material, sought to master the world's wealth rather than to regenerate its spirit. Such aims, with the increased participation of their advocates in the governments of many lands, led to an intense and narrow nationalism, a patriotism of the pocket, the self-contained, self-satisfied, and jealous state. The nineteenth century had been an age of faith; the pre-war twentieth was sceptical of the gods of its predecessor, while its own were new and strange and commanded no serious homage. Opportunism reigned in politics and philosophy, and Truth was quoted in the markets at varying values. Creeds were in solution and the clear-cut dogmas of the previous century gave way to a waning intellectual vitality, content to be at once sceptical and credulous.

“It was a world self-satisfied without contentment, a world in which material prosperity was no index to happiness. Mankind was drifting into jealous cliques, while every day their economic bonds became more subtly interlinked; and since this situation could not endure, it was certain that some form of unity, false or true, would soon be inevitable. Such a unity might follow upon a new faith in the brotherhood of man, but, in the decadence of the great constructive ideals of politics and religion, it was hard to see how this faith would be born. Or it might come from the material reconstruction of life, of which the communists dreamed, when men would be brigaded not by nations but by classes, and an international proletariat would call the tune. Or lastly it might arise if a single power should establish a world-wide hegemony and impose its rule and culture upon the subservient peoples.”

This History is the record of the calamity which shattered the world's complacency; the mighty convulsion in which much that mankind had accepted as good has disappeared, and much for which millions died remains still unrealized and intangible.

A characteristic of Colonel Buchan's work is its chivalric fairness even to the enemy, and the absence of that disagreeable tone of wisdom shown by many commentators



who write in the light of after events. His conceptions of the strategy of the various theatres of the war are sound. The pictures of the great leaders are presented with fidelity. The national characteristics and racial idiosyncracies of the various Allies are treated with tolerance and without visible bias. One cannot read without renewed appreciation of the martyrdom of brave little Belgium which saved the honor of the British race by raising the *moral* issue which brought them into the war. And of France, — the gallant French, — whose officers had produced some of the best military literature of modern times, whose traditions were of the Grande Armée with its rapid and cumulative attacks, and who for over four years retained all their historic dash and *élan*, while facing national death with noble calm and shining fortitude, no History can say too much. The race was ready to perish on the battlefield sooner than accept German domination. Many would die, but of a surety France, in whose eternity they were but a moment, would survive. It is the fashion of the hour to permit the unspeakable horrors of Bolshevism to obscure the part which Imperial Russia took in the war. Russia entered the war with her military resources undeveloped, and suffered from lack of strategic policy. The empire lacked the machinery for a rapid expansion of munitions. Her railways were few and poorly distributed for war. In offensive warfare where time was of the essence of the problem her defects were obvious. Hypothetics is a bastard science which should be shunned by the historian, — but had the Dardanelles Expedition had a different ending, giving Russia access to the Mediterranean through the Black Sea, the history of the world would have been changed. The turn of Fortune's wheel took Russia out of the war, but while in it her part was gallant and effective. She did not deserve that her flag should have had no place on the day of our great Allied march through the Arc de Triomphe on July 14th, 1919. The entrance of Italy into the War was no matter of impulse. Her commercial interests were largely in German hands. She is a young country, largely de-

pendent on foreign shipping for food, and without coal or iron. For over a quarter of a century the ally of the Central Powers, Italy was doubtless reluctant to take up arms against them. Her decision to make war followed careful calculation as to the probable outcome, and was preceded by much negotiation for territory as an inducement to take the side of the Central Powers. The London Pact of April 26, 1915, between Italy, Great Britain, France, and Russia gave a higher price than the Teutonic League could offer, and was conditioned on Italy breaking with her former Allies within a month. Once in, Italy bore herself well.

That Colonel Buchan describes the part played by Britain somewhat more in detail than that of her Allies is easily forgiven, certainly by those in whose veins flows English blood, and by all who, reading the history of the last eight centuries, can testify how well the British soldier knows how to die. One can well understand the pride with which an Englishman calls the roll of races and lands that responded to the martial drum-beat of Britain in 1914. To the great outpouring from her island homes, with scarcely a name missing from those great in her stormy history, her absent sons came rallying from many a tropic isle and distant strand. Our own gallant neighbor, Canada, with the men of the sweeping western plains; the Boers, Basutos, and Barotses, children of the African veldt; the brave Anzacs from Australia and New Zealand; black men from the West Indies; the proud old races of lands from Burma to beyond the Khyber Pass, reigning princes of families as ancient when Alexander invaded India as are the historic houses of Howard and Cecil to-day, all the great names of her Indian Empire from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin; Mongol and Aryan, Teuton and Celt; the followers of Christ, of Buddha, Mahomet, and Brahma and a thousand lesser faiths. No such pageant of the legions had ever before been mustered under the colors of a reigning sovereign.

It is, of course, the portion of this History which deals with the American effort which will have the most intense

interest for our public. Colonel Buchan presents a very discriminating and sympathetic analysis of the difficulties of America's position as a neutral. His statement of our political philosophy, with a keen sense of our inconsistencies, as well as his estimate of the great abilities and leadership of President Wilson, unable, sometimes, it seemed, to envisage a rough-and-tumble world where decisions were won by deed and not by phrases, can be read with profit by all Americans. The highest tribute is paid to the President's statesmanship as revealed in his speeches of February 26 and April 2, 1917. The Message asking for a Declaration of War will rank among the greatest of America's famous state documents. Couched in terms of studious moderation and dignity, it stated not only the case of America against Germany, but of civilization against barbarism and popular government against tyranny.

The American Expeditionary Forces, capable of expansion, if need be, to fifteen millions of soldiers, are thus introduced on the stage of this History:

"The old American Army had been small, but its officers followed the life for the love of it, and were to a high degree professional experts. For its size, the staff was probably equal to any in the world. Those who watched the first American soldiers on the continent of Europe — grave young men, with lean, shaven faces, a quick springy walk and a superb bodily fitness — found their memories returning to Gettysburg and the Wilderness, where the same stock had shown an endurance and heroism not surpassed in the history of mankind. And they were disposed to agree with the observer who remarked that it had taken a long time to get America into the war, but that it would take much longer to get her out."

Thus our friends the Allies, while the German press was picturing daily anti-war demonstrations in New York, with weeping and desperate conscripts herded on board our transports by special police. Whatever the German General Staff thought, the press and politicians gave no sign that they realized the gravity of this addition to the Allied strength. "The financiers told the people that it

was fortunate that America had entered the war, since she was the only Allied country from which a big indemnity could be extracted. The great American Army, said the press, could not swim or fly, therefore it would never arrive."

How slowly the Americans seemed to arrive during that first year we were in the war, and how desperately their coming was longed for in the spring of 1918, with the enemy thundering on the Somme and the Marne, can scarcely be appreciated by any one not in Europe during those anxious days. In March when General Pershing made his dramatic offer of all his resources to Foch, he had but four divisions under his command; by the end of May he had nearly a dozen ready for the front line, and others were crossing the Atlantic at the rate of more than a quarter of a million soldiers per month. Their preliminary training at home had been so expedited that by midsummer we were landing in France every five weeks as many troops as the annual compulsory recruitment of Germany. In March but three hundred thousand soldiers in France, the American armies by November numbered over two millions of men. On February 1st the French held 520 kilometers of front, the British 187, and the Americans 10; November 11th, the French held 343, the Americans 134, and the British 113 kilometers, the total front varying by the retirement of the German lines.

On May 28th an event happened which may have given the enemy food for thought. A regiment of the 1st American Division, Major-General Bullard, took the village of Cantigny in the Montdidier section, and held it against three counter-attacks. It was something neatly and efficiently to carry out an offensive, but to consolidate and hold its gains was a happy omen for the future. In June the 2nd Division, Major-General Bundy, attacking at the southwest corner of the German salient, near Château Thierry, captured Bouresches, Vaux, and Belleau Wood, and the 3rd Division, under Major-General Dickman, acting with the French, took Hill 204, in the same neighborhood. By the middle of July there were 300,000 Americans



in the line or in immediate support, serving under the French Generals Gouraud, Degoutte, and Mangin. When on the 15th the enemy passed the Marne, the 3rd Division, with elements of the 28th, checked and rolled them back, clearing part of the south bank and taking prisoners.

The time had now come for the counter-stroke after which the enemy never gained ground forward. The Allied Commander-in-Chief struck the apex and side of the salient which had been made when the enemy broke through between Rheims and Soissons on May 28th, and which he was still desperately endeavoring to widen. Mangin's Army which was to conduct the main operation, was on the western side of the salient; Degoutte's in front of its apex on the Marne. Mangin's striking force consisted of the 1st American Division, Major-General Summerall, the 1st French Moroccan Division, General Dogan, and the 2nd American Division, Major-General Harbord. It was the first time American Divisions had been used as such in a major operation, and they were proud to attack by the side of the best shock troops of France. The three attacking divisions were assembled in the great forest of Villers-Cotterets on the 17th, and on the morning of the 18th, after a night of thunderstorms and furious rain and wind, went over the top. The combined attack of Degoutte and Mangin extended for thirty-five miles, from Belleau Wood near Château Thierry to Fontenoy on the Aisne. Many thousand prisoners and much artillery were captured by Mangin's attack, and the 2nd American Division made an advance of nearly eight miles — the longest advance as yet made in a single day by the Allies in the West. The German salient was narrowed and its western flank crumbled. Foch had wrested the initiative from the enemy and the Allies never again lost it. "Moments of high crisis slip past unnoticed; it is only the historian in later years who can point to a half-hour in a crowded day and say that then was decided the fate of a cause or a people. . . . When the Allies breasted the Montagne de Paris and the Vierzey plateau on that July morning, they had, without



knowing it, won the Second Battle of the Marne, and with it the War. Four months earlier Ludendorff had stood as the apparent dictator of Europe; four months later he and his master were in exile."

The temptation to linger on the brave days of action that came between July and November, 1918, is a very strong one to an American soldier. Events moved swiftly all along the Western Front, and the Americans were by September fighting under their own Commander-in-Chief. It was the month of St. Mihiel, and General Pershing, collecting his far-flung divisions into the First American Army, half a million strong, to which were added some seventy thousand French troops, destroyed the salient which had been held by the Germans since 1914. The battle lasted three days, and at its close the heights of the Meuse were cleared of the enemy and the Allied line ran from the Meurthe below Pont-à-Mousson roughly northwest past Thiaucourt, St. Benoit, and Fresnes to the old Verdun front at Bezonvaux. Sixteen thousand prisoners were taken and over 400 guns, with a mass of every kind of stores. It was an achievement of the utmost significance. It proved, if proof were needed, the quality of American troops organized in the largest units and under their own commanders. Strategically it vastly assisted the Allied communications, and restored in that area the power of attack at any moment and in any direction. No enemy salient remained as an advance guard in the West.

With hardly a pause after St. Mihiel, Pershing's First Army extended to the west into the Argonne forest, a desperate country where little impression had been made on the enemy's defense since the first months of the war. He was to strike down the Meuse in the direction of Mézières. It was the most naturally difficult terrain on the Western Front; the measure of its difficulties was the measure of the honor in which Foch held the fighting quality of his Allies from beyond the sea. In the chill foggy dawn of September 26th, the Americans and the French army of Gouraud on their left crossed their parapets on a front of

forty miles. Gouraud's was the containing attack and the Americans were the spear-head. For forty-six days, where our Wilderness had lasted but seven, the great battle which we call the Meuse-Argonne added luster to the American arms. Its splendid story is told in the citations of the time and on the streamers to the regimental colors in many a gallant American Division. Malancourt, Epiononville, Cheppy, Varennes, Montfaucon, Somme-py, Blanc Mont, Apremont, Grand Pré, Landres-St. George, Bois de Barricourt, Buzancy, Mézières, and, shall we say, Sedan, are names enshrined for all time in the traditions of the American Army!

And then the Armistice and the march to the Rhine! By the middle of December the tricolor guarded the mouth of the Main, the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew flaunted over the ancient cathedral city of Cologne, and the stars and stripes flew above Coblenz, where the Moselle joins the Rhine, and on the silent fortress of Ehrenbreitstein!

Colonel Buchan well says:

"It would be a task both futile and invidious to discuss the relative contributions of the different Allies to this achievement. All had in it a full and noble share. . . . America, entering late into the strife, made ready great armies at a speed unparalleled in history, and brought about victory before the wreckage of the world was beyond repair. . . .

"The gains and losses are not yet to be assessed, but there is ground for humble confidence that that sowing in unimaginable sacrifice and pain will yet quicken and bear fruit to the bettering of the world. The war was a vindication of the essential greatness of our common nature, for victory was won less by genius in the few than by faithfulness in the many. Every class had its share, and the plain man born in these latter days of doubt and divided purpose marched to heights of the heroic unsurpassed in simpler ages. In this revelation democracy found its final justification, and civilization its truest hope. Mankind may console itself in its hour of depression and failure, and steel itself to new labours, with the knowledge that once it has been great."

J. G. HARBORD  
*Major-General, U.S. Army*

COBLENZ, GERMANY  
*July 28, 1922*



BOOK I.

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THE EARLY WAR OF MANŒUVRE.





# A HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

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## CHAPTER I.

### PROLOGUE : AT SERAJEVO.

*June 28, 1914.*

ON the morning of Sunday, 28th June, in the year 1914, the Bosnian city of Serajevo was astir with the expectation of a royal visit. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the Hapsburg throne and the nephew of the Emperor, had been for the past days attending the manœuvres of the 15th and 16th Army Corps, and had suddenly announced his intention of inspecting the troops in the capital. He had embarked at Trieste on the Wednesday, in the new battleship *Viribus Unitis*, and had been joined at Ilidje by his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, whose position was a source of perpetual strife between himself and his uncle's Court. It was a military occasion ; the civic authorities were given short notice, and had little time to organize a reception ; and the royal party were met at the station only by Count Potiorek, the Governor of Bosnia, and his staff. The visitors drove in motor cars through the uneven streets of the little city, which, with its circle of barren hills and its mosques and minarets, reminds the traveller of Asia rather than of Europe. There was a great crowd in the streets—Catholic Croats, with whom the Archduke was not unpopular ; Orthodox and Mussulman Serbs, who looked askance at all things Austrian ; and those strange, wildly clad gipsies that throng every Balkan town. But the crowd was not there to greet the Emperor's nephew. It was the day of Kossovo, the anniversary of that fatal fight when the Sultan Murad I. destroyed the old Serbian kingdom. For five centuries it had been kept as a day of mourning, but this year for the first time it was celebrated in Serbia as a national fête, since the Balkan War had restored the losses of the Field of Black-

birds. Belgrade kept high holiday, and the people of the Bosnian capital followed the example of their kinsmen beyond the Save and the Drina.

The Southern Slav provinces of Austria-Hungary had been the centre of disquiet and of misgovernment ever since the year 1867, when the "dualist" system was adopted. In that year the race was divided, part going to Austria and part to Hungary; and in 1878 a third Slav group was added, when the Hapsburgs acquired the military and administrative control of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Slowly a common race-consciousness was developed among the three groups, and when Serbia passed under the rule of the popular Karageorgevitch dynasty, that little kingdom became to the malcontent Slavs of Austria-Hungary what the Piedmont of Cavour had been to Italy. The peasants and the educated classes everywhere in the land of the Southern Slavs began to cherish dreams of racial unity and independence. The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 by the Hapsburgs increased the discontent, and the Government at Budapest entered upon a policy of repression, in which, as in the infamous Agram trials, forgery and perjury were not infrequent. The result was many crimes of violence against alien officials, and a drawing closer of the bonds between the Southern Slavs of Austria-Hungary and their kinsmen of Serbia. A vigorous propaganda began through public and secret channels, and the achievement of Serbia in the Balkan War turned the eyes of the oppressed towards her as their future deliverer. The common celebration of Kossovo Day was a pledge of an hour of deliverance to come. It was an inopportune occasion for the Hapsburg heir to visit Serajevo.

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand was a man in middle life, a lonely and saddened figure oppressed by the imminence of a fatal disease. In most respects he was a typical Austrian conservative, but as compared with the majority of his countrymen he had something of the larger vision in statesmanship. He saw that Austria-Hungary was succeeding ill in the government of her strangely varied races, more especially the six and a half millions of Southern Slavs. He had watched with anxiety the rise of Serbia, and the position she was assuming in the eyes of his own Croats and Serbs and Slovenes as their future emancipator. As a member of the House of Hapsburg he sought to counter the Greater Serbian ideal with that of a Greater Austria. He dreamed of a Balkan Federation, which should include Rumania, under Austro-German auspices, and early in June he had discussed the matter with the

German Emperor among the rose-gardens of Konopischt, and obtained his assent. In his own country his policy was the destruction of the "dualist" system and the establishment in its place of a "trialism," under which the Slav element should be equal in power to the Austrian and the Hungarian, and the different races should have a real local autonomy and find union in a Federal Parliament. For this reason, and also for the sake of his wife who was of Slavonic blood, he was not disliked in the Southern provinces. In Austria he was little loved. His cold manner repelled the ordinary citizen, and the military party at Vienna had set their faces like flint against his "triune" policy, though they worked harmoniously with him in reorganizing the army and the fleet. In Hungary the Magyar oligarchy, led by Count Stephen Tisza, were his avowed enemies, for their power depended upon the suppression of the subject races. In their eyes the existing régime must be preserved at any cost, and they had long frankly avowed that their attitude meant war. Sooner or later—and better soon than late—Serbia must be crushed, and with her the Pan-Serbian dream. The Archduke was therefore a voice in the wilderness, and his deadliest foes were those of his own household. His ideals provided at least a chance of peace, while those of his opponents contemplated at some early day the abandonment of the arts of statesmanship for the sword.

The royal party proceeded slowly towards the Town Hall. Motoring in Serajevo is a leisurely business, and there was a great crowd along the Appel Quay. Just before they reached the Chumuria Bridge over the Miliatzka a black package fell on the open hood of the Archduke's car. He pushed it off, and it exploded in front of the second car, slightly wounding two of his suite and six or seven spectators. The would-be assassin was arrested. He was a compositor called Gabrinovitch, from Trebinje in Herzegovina, who had lived some time in Belgrade. "The fellow will get the Cross of Merit for this," was the reported remark of the Archduke. He knew his real enemies, and was aware that to powerful circles in Vienna and Budapest the news of his death would not be unwelcome.

Arrived at the Town Hall, the Archduke was presented by Count Potiorek to the Burgomaster. He was in something of a temper. "What is the use of your speeches?" he asked. "I come here to pay you a visit, and I am greeted with bombs." The embarrassed city dignitaries read the address of welcome, and the Archduke made a formal reply. He then proposed to drive

to the hospital to visit his wounded aide-de-camp. Some small attempt was made to dissuade him, for in the narrow streets among the motley population no proper guard could be kept. But Count Potiorek was reassuring. He knew his Bosnians, he said, and they rarely attempted two murders in one day. The party set out accordingly, the Archduke and his wife in the same car with the Governor.

About ten minutes to eleven, as they moved slowly along the Appel Quay, in the narrow part where it is joined by the Franz-Josefsgasse a young man pushed forward from the crowd on the side-walk and fired three pistol shots into the royal car. He was a Bosnian student called Prinzip, a friend of Gabrinovitch, who like him had been living in Belgrade. The Archduke was hit in the jugular vein, and died almost at once. His wife received a bullet in her side, and expired a few minutes later in the Government House, after receiving the last sacraments.

The tumult of the fête-day was suddenly hushed. The police were busy in every street, laying hands on suspects, and in an impassioned proclamation to the awed and silent city the Burgo-master laid the crime at Serbia's door.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WORLD ON THE EVE OF WAR.

The Maladies of the Pre-war World—Modern Germany—The Emperor—German Statesmen—The Soldiers and Sailors—The Kings of Trade—Germany's *Grandeur*—The Motive of Fear—Austria-Hungary—France—Britain—The Events preceding the Cataclysm—Germany's Turning of the Ways.

GREAT events spring only from great causes, but the immediate occasion may be small. From the flight of Helen and Paris down to the Ems telegram there has commonly been some single incident which has acted as the explosive charge to the waiting magazine of strife. The throwing of two envoys out of a window precipitated the Thirty Years' War; a sentence spoken from a balcony at Versailles began the War of the Spanish Succession; an escapade of hot-blooded youth inaugurated the revolution from which sprung the United States. "A common soldier, a child, a girl at the door of an inn, have changed the face of fortune and almost of Nature." \* The events of that June morning at Serajevo were dramatic enough in themselves, but in their sequel they must rank among the fateful moments of history. They brought to a head the secular antagonism between Slav and Teuton, and awoke the dormant ambitions and fears of every Power in Europe. It is necessary, for a proper understanding of the issue, to review the condition of the chief nations at the time when the crime of a printers' devil and a schoolboy stripped off the diplomatic covering and laid bare the iron facts to the eyes of the world.

#### I.

In our quest for understanding we must go behind the incidents of politics, which are no more than indices of more secret and potent causes. The world in 1914 was nearly half through the second decade of the twentieth century, and the preceding age had come

\* Burke: *Letters on a Regicide Peace.*



to be lightly esteemed. Its great battles for freedom had been fought long ago, and the Victorians had lost their glamour. The nineteenth century had begun as an era of hope, and had ended as an epoch of confidence; but in 1914 the hope seemed a lack-lustre thing and the confidence premature. Most of its famous creeds, once so cogent in their appeal—Comtism, utilitarianism, the decorous liberalism of Gladstone, the mystic nationalism of Mazzini, the belief in the mastery of man over nature, Darwinism with its infinite corollaries, the dreams of empire-builders, the evolutionary socialism of the nineties—were shaken in the esteem of mankind. They had either lost their votaries, since they were now disconsidered commonplaces, or the spirit of dialectic was questioning their authority. The nineteenth century had been after its fashion an age of faith; the twentieth was sceptical of its predecessor's gods, and had not yet found those of its own which could awake the same serious fervour. The criticism which the Victorians had applied to earlier codes of belief was now turned relentlessly against their own dogmas. The popular creed both in politics and philosophy was opportunist; the large reconstructions of earlier thinkers were out of favour; and Truth was fashionably stated in terms of "experiential cash value." Such a mood meant tolerance and a certain generosity of sympathy. The iconoclasts of the nineteenth century had too intense a religious interest to tolerate that which they thought to be false; the twentieth century, hesitating before any convictions, was chary of dogmatism or blunt denial. The Victorian street-corner atheist now tended to be a respectful, if lukewarm, patron of many gods.

But the new century was still the child of the old. The great discoveries of physical science had borne fruit in a wide diffusion of wealth and the confidence which prosperity brings. The world on the eve of war felt itself secure and comfortable, and was inclined to revere its own handiwork. What the Italian historian labelled "Americanism" \* had become a very general malady. There was everywhere on the globe a feverish hunt for wealth and a craze for luxury. The huge scientific and social machine which the world had created seemed to be beyond the reach of danger, and mechanism insensibly ruled the minds of many who thought they held a different creed. That manly humility which the language of theology calls the "fear of God" was not common in the second decade of the twentieth century. If men were shy in the face of dogma, they were confident about facts. The assur-

\* Ferrero: *Ancient Rome and Modern America*.



ance of their fathers had been a higher thing, for it was a belief in the existence of an ideal ; that of the sons came perilously near to self-satisfaction.

The increase of luxury meant suffering among the less fortunate, and the parade of the rich involved the discontent of the poor. The world was in the main good-humoured, being comfortable ; and there was much good-will abroad, and many enterprises of philanthropic experiment. But throughout Europe there was fierce antagonism among the dispossessed towards those in possession, and a growing class-consciousness in what was known as the "proletariat." The "social democracy" aimed at a revolution and a new world, and, following the example of its opponents, its aims were essentially material. It sought to master the world's wealth rather than to regenerate the world's spirit. This aim, combined with the large powers which the people had won in the government of most lands, led to an intense nationalism in practice. The workers of one country, controlling the administration of that country, were prepared to set up any barrier that would secure the wealth which they sought to share from being pilfered by foreigners. The consequence was that, while men were little disposed to contend for ideals, they were very willing to struggle for material good things. The old romantic nationalism seemed to have decayed, and in its place had come a new nationalism of the pocket. The world, and most notably Europe, had moved towards both materialism and the self-contained and jealous state. The Catholic Church, which maintained the spiritual interpretation of life and the brotherhood of peoples, had lost much of its power over both the learned and the unlearned, and could not counteract the forces of disunion. At a time when science and commerce had interwoven as never before the life of all humanity, the nations were beginning to draw in their skirts and regard each other with jealous eyes ; nor to the observer did there appear in any quarter an ideal potent enough to restore the unity of Christendom and that vision without which the people perish.

The decline of dogma and assured belief was accompanied by a curious development in thought which may be described as the cult of "irrationalism." This was less a creed than a very general attitude of mind. The scepticism of the nineteenth century, which led to strong anti-orthodox faiths, was replaced by a failure of intellectual vitality which was content to be at once sceptical and credulous. Instinct was glorified at the expense of the reason. The phrase of the Church father, which was Newman's favourite

quotation, had become a watchword even for serious minds: "*Non in dialectica placuit Deo salvum facere populum suum.*" In religion, in politics, in social science there was everywhere found a tendency to exalt emotion and to appeal to the heart rather than the head. That a scheme was logically indefensible was no bar to its acceptance, and the attempt to think out a policy to its conclusions was branded as the mark of a pedantic and illiberal mind. When creeds were thus in solution, and there were few boundaries left fixed, the way was opened to those vague and potent eruptions of the human spirit which, like the inroads of the Barbarians on the Roman Empire, make a sharp breach with the past, and destroy what they could not have created.

It was a world self-satisfied without contentment, a world in which material prosperity was no index to happiness. Mankind was drifting into jealous cliques, while every day their economic bonds became more subtly interlinked; and, since this situation could not endure, it was certain that some form of unity, false or true, would soon be inevitable. Such a unity might follow upon a new faith in the brotherhood of man, but, in the decadence of the great constructive ideals of politics and religion, it was hard to see how this faith could be born. Or it might come from the materialist reconstruction of life, of which communists dreamed, when men would be universally brigaded not by nations but by classes, and an international proletariat would call the tune. Or, lastly, it might arise if a single Power should establish a world-wide hegemony and impose its rule and its culture upon the subservient peoples.

This book is the record of a calamity which shattered the world's complacency and enabled men to look into their hearts. From the *malaise* I have described no nation was free, but it was fated that one strong Power should exhibit it in so monstrous a form that humanity shuddered and drew back from conclusions which all peoples had toyed with but only one had dared to accept. Our first step must be to examine the mood and condition of the protagonists on the eve of the struggle, the causes of which had been sown and had fructified through many years. The position of other nations will be discussed as they enter the arena; for the present we will deal with the three main antagonists—the Empire of Germany, the Commonwealth of Britain, and the Republic of France.

## II.

The history of the land between the Baltic and the Alps, the Rhine and the Oder, was for more than a thousand years one of confusion, separation, and incessant strife. The palsied hand of the Holy Roman Empire gave neither unity nor peace. Again and again Germany was left almost a desert by war, as when after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 fields relapsed into jungles, wolves were the only living thing in vast regions, and the population shrank from twenty millions to four. In the wars of Frederick the Great, likewise, one tenth of the people perished. From this long, bitter record the German race learned two lessons—the misery of military weakness, and the folly of disunion. They found the leader who was to extricate them from their quagmire in the northern state of Prussia, and when five centuries ago Frederick of Hohenzollern, the Burgrave of Nuremberg, was given the vice-royalty of the Mark of Brandenburg by the Emperor Sigismund, the foundations of modern Germany were laid. The majority of the kings of that house were trivial folk, but one or two were politically great, and they established a tradition which accorded well with the nature of the dwellers on the bleak Baltic seaboard and the harsh Pomeranian soil. By violence and subtlety they extended their borders in each century and enlarged their importance. In 1701 the Elector of Brandenburg became King of Prussia; Frederick the Great added Silesia and parts of Poland; it was a queen of the Hohenzollern house who inspired the resistance to Napoleon which made possible Leipzig and Waterloo; and at long last it was a Hohenzollern king who made Germany an Empire. Prussia was the new Germany, and to the ordinary man Prussia seemed a Hohenzollern creation. The prestige of a dynasty, a dying thing in the modern world, was therefore a living reality for the Germans.

That race, as their neighbours saw them, was divided into the born-to-be-drilled and the natural drill-masters. The ordinary Teuton of the south and centre was industrious, dreamy, and obedient, the docile prey of the drill-sergeant of Brandenburg; though, let it be remembered, it was this Germany from which sprang the great Germans, for Prussia has scarcely produced one man of first-rate genius save Bismarck. The Prussians were in most respects the precise opposite. Narrow, one-ideaed, unimaginative, they had the genius of bureaucracy, and did everything by rule and plan. That is to say, they were the best machine-makers

in the world, and after 1870 their machine was all Germany. Not the army and navy alone, but German commerce, German education, German literature—the trail of the drill-master was over them all. The Prussian outside Prussia was not popular, but we shall be wrong if we regard the general submission to him as the result only of an inborn servility of soul. In the fibre of every German was an hereditary memory of the old bad days of weak statelets and endless wars. He was instinctively prepared to undergo any discipline for the sake of peace. He would accept union not for the love of Prussia but because it promised security; he would submit to be drilled not from any militarist hankerings, but because it gave him strength. For one man who welcomed a military autocracy for its own sake, a hundred accepted it as a guarantee against war. They revered the Hohenzollerns because that dynasty seemed to have lifted their world out of anarchy into order.

The German Empire was a creation of the victories of 1870, and in the last resort of Bismarck. It was a confederation not wholly homogeneous, for it included unwilling elements in the people of Posen, Schleswig, and Alsace-Lorraine; but in the main it was a union of the German race, as revealed in history, with the exception of the twelve millions left under the rule of the Hapsburgs. The greatness of Bismarck as a man is beyond the reach of criticism. The destruction of his life's work cannot remove him from the select group of shaping and controlling minds which have determined the future of nations and of the world. For power of intellect and character he belongs to that class, strangely varied in spirit and achievement, which includes Cæsar and Charlemagne, Frederick and Napoleon, Washington and Lincoln and Cavour. He did not act blindly. He weighed the ideals of Western democracy and found them wanting. He set himself deliberately to oppose what were regarded as the characteristic movements of his age, but he did not distinguish between transient fashion and eternal verity. He forgot the truth that though you may set back the hands of the clock you cannot alter the rising and setting of the sun. He led the way in that fatal habit of abstraction by which politics are made a rigid science excluding the better part of human life. But he was a very great statesman, and not wont to allow any dogma to obscure his insight into the heart of a situation. He did not pin his faith to formulas. Readers of his memoirs and conversations will remember that his acute, far-reaching mind saw the weakness in that school of thought which is popularly called Bis-



marckian. "We must direct our policy in accordance with facts," he said in 1891—"that is, we must do our best to prevent war or to limit it." "In the future," he wrote in his *Memoirs*, "not only sufficient military equipment, but also a correct political eye will be required to guide the German ship of state through the currents of coalition, to which in consequence of our geographical position and our previous history we are exposed. We ought to do all we can to weaken the bad feeling among the nations, which has been evoked by our advance to the position of a Great Power, by the honourable and peaceful use of our influence. . . . In order to produce this confidence it is, above everything, necessary that we should act honourably and openly." That is not Bismarckianism, as it is commonly understood. But, like many great men, he suffered from his epigrams. The unhappy phrase, spoken on September 29, 1862, in the Prussian Diet—"The great question of the day will be settled not by speeches and resolutions of majorities, but by blood and iron"—rang malefically in the ears of his people. His disciples pinned their faith to blood and iron, and forgot the prudence which the Chancellor had presupposed. Had he been in power in 1914 we may be assured that he would have selected for Germany a very different part from that which she chose to play. Yet we shall not be wrong in seeing in modern German policy a direct inheritance from Bismarck. The spirit which inspired his main achievements was the spirit of Germany in 1914. His aberrations rather than his wisdom became, as often happens, the gospel of his successors. He had bequeathed an over-sharp sword, which, when wielded by clumsier men, was certain to cut their hands. His giant's robe was too heavy for pigmy wearers; its magnificence inflamed their pride, its amplitude caused them to stumble, and in the end it shrank to a shirt of Nessus which drove them mad.

The system of government which Bismarck prepared for Germany may be compared with the First Napoleon's reconstruction of France, inasmuch as it embraced every side of the national life. The constitution was absolutist in effect, with a parody of certain democratic forms. Election for the Lower House, the Reichstag, was by manhood suffrage, every man above twenty-five having a vote; but since there had been no redivision of electoral areas since 1872, the increase and shifting of population had made the representation grossly unequal. The powers of the Reichstag were small, being limited to voting upon the Budget and upon legislation for the Empire as a whole, which legislation was first

framed by the Bundesrat. The Bundesrat or Upper House was composed of representatives of the twenty-five component States, nominated and not elected; and of such representatives Prussia had seventeen, thereby possessing a permanent majority. The Imperial Government was neither representative nor responsible. At its head was the Imperial Chancellor, appointed by the Emperor, and the other Ministers were appointed by the Chancellor. The Reichstag could question Ministers, and for the purposes of the Budget it was desirable that the Chancellor should have a majority of its members behind him, but beyond that its control ceased. Through the medium of the Chancellor all final authority came into the Emperor's hands. He was in supreme command of the Army and the Navy and dictated their organization; he was the supreme director of foreign affairs; he sanctioned all new laws; he was responsible for the appointment of every Imperial functionary. So far as any deliberative body had real authority, it was the Bundesrat—which was Prussia—which was in turn the Emperor; and owing to the antiquated electoral system and the far-reaching powers of the executive it was not difficult to find a coalition inside the Reichstag which would work smoothly under the Imperial will.

The true nature of a constitution is not to be sought in its legal forms, but in the spirit in which it is worked and the nature of the men who govern. The temperament of the rulers of Germany was the decisive fact. First among them stood the Emperor. "The generality of princes," Gibbon wrote, "if they were stripped of their purple and cast naked into the world, would immediately sink to the lowest rank of society, without a hope of emerging from their obscurity."\* This harsh saying was not true of William II.: in whatever class he had been born he would have been a figure of note. It was his misfortune that destiny had placed him in a position where his faults were too readily hailed as virtues and his virtues were encouraged to degenerate into vices. He came to the throne at a difficult moment, an eager, curious youth, with a weak, nervous system and a restless energy, profoundly impressed by the greatness of his place and full of incoherent and undisciplined ambitions. Such a temperament is fatal to a constitutional monarchy, but it may suit moderately well with autocracy, and an autocrat William was from the start. Bismarck read him shrewdly. "I pity the young man," he said in May 1890. "He is like a young hound; he barks at everything, he touches everything,

\* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xxiii.



and he ends by causing complete disorder in the room in which he is, no matter how large it may be." That same year the Emperor "dropped the pilot" and became his own adviser, for his youth and the crabbed age of the great Chancellor could not live together.

The new autocrat was a type of monarch to dazzle the populace in his own and other lands. He had great charm of manner and knew how to condescend gracefully to all classes of men. In his multitudinous uniforms he made a fine spectacular figure, and this dignity increased the effect of his frequent condescensions. He had much facile kindness of heart, and on occasion he had even a sense of humour. His abounding and half-neurotic vitality made him amenable to new ideas, his ready emotionalism made him translate these ideas into popular rhetoric, and the self-confidence which grew with every year of his reign convinced him of the profundity of each of his fleeting views. He took all knowledge for his province, and suffered the fate of such adventurers, for his excursions in scholarship, art, theology, and metaphysics produced amusement rather than edification. His mind was incapable of real originality or sustained and serious thought; it was the mind of the journalist or the actor, and therefore susceptible to every wave of feeling, to every fragment of an idea, that might pass through the brain of the people which he ruled. He became the barometer of German opinion; he did not direct it, but he registered and was directed by it. This susceptibility made him a lover of theatrical parts, most of which he played moderately well. They were wrong who accused him of insincerity. He was sincere enough while the mood lasted; the trouble was that it was only a mood and did not last long. The conception of William II. as an iron-hearted Borgia preparing ruthlessly for conquest was as far from the truth as that picture of him as a mild angel of peace which was at one time foisted upon the world.

If we look deeper into his mind we shall find a strange compost of tastes and aptitudes. He had an acute, if perverted, sense of history, and his soul was hag-ridden by his forerunners. From the contemplation of the legends of the German races and the empire of Otto and Barbarossa he acquired a kind of mystic mediævalism. He was the heir of the old Cæsars, and he would revive the Holy Roman Empire with a Lutheran creed. As early as 1890 he told the world: "I look upon the people and the nation handed on to me as a responsibility conferred upon me by God,

and I believe, as it is written in the Bible, that it is my duty to increase this heritage, for which one day I shall be called upon to give an account. Those who try to interfere with my task I shall crush." The doctrine of Divine Right had had a new birth, and its exponent filled in turn all the parts which his reading of history dictated—the heir of Siegfried, the successor of Charlemagne, the Crusader who prayed at the Holy Sepulchre, the prophet who wore Luther's mantle, the wielder of the sword of Frederick the Great. The Imperial mind was like the Siegesallee in the Berlin Thiergarten—filled with flamboyant effigies of the illustrious dead. But there was another side to him, for he was also the man of his age, a leader in commercial propaganda, very sensible of the power of money, and zealous to make his country wealthy as well as great. He cultivated the society of the new-rich, and the aristocracy which he created was largely a plutocracy. He laboured to prove that he was not only the vicegerent of God and the successor of Barbarossa, but the first of the world's bagmen. *Mars commis-voyageur*—the cruel French phrase is the best epitome of the rôle he had chosen.

With all his faults he was a ruler admirably suited to the Germany of his day. His passion for the top-note, his garish personality, his splendid vitality, his amazing speeches, were in tune with the grandiose temper of his people. He was popular as a man must always be who puts into words what a nation desires to think. He was revered by masses of men because his pretensions seemed to swell their own greatness. His vulgarity did not offend, because it was the vulgarity of modern Germany. Moreover, his untiring energy was commercially invaluable, for an autocrat in a hurry is the most efficient of hustlers. Had he been only a figure-head, his quick shallow intelligence would have been no danger to the world, for its inconstancy would have provided a corrective to its extravagance. Unhappily he was also the chief executive power in his land, and had the ordering of German policy. Unable to read the hearts of other peoples, he had to conduct negotiations with them, and *bêtises*, which would have been harmless enough as the pranks of a negligible royalty, became dangerous when they appeared in the fragile world of diplomacy. He loved the pageantry of war, but had no knowledge of its practical meaning, and rattled his sabre as a rhetorical gesture. As a statesman he was without aptitude or judgment, and yet with him lay the last word in his country's statecraft. Into his capricious hands the Fates had put the issues of life and death.

The Imperial Crown Prince was in character an exaggerated copy of one side of his father. That narrow-chested, slim-waisted young man of thirty-two, with the receding forehead and the retreating chin, was to foreign observers a singularly unattractive personage, a mixture of the suburban Don Juan and the lightest of feather-weight swashbucklers. The verdict scarcely did him justice. He had considerable mental quickness, and a shrewd gift of assessing popular feeling. This talent, combined with his dashing air and his surface *bonhomie*, gave him a popularity which he sedulously cultivated. Wise men might grow nervous about his antics, but the mass of the German people applauded them. He was a lover of sports and games, and in the army had the kind of repute which a crack polo-player had in a British cavalry regiment; his keenness in one form of activity was construed into a capacity for the serious business of war. He was the dazzling representative of a service which burned to show its prowess on the largest stage, and his occasional tiffs with his father were due to his beating the war drum louder than prudence permitted. The Emperor's manifold ambitions were narrowed in the son to a single craving—he was determined to be a conqueror, to lead his cavalry in a "hussar ride" which should conquer the world. Whenever soldiers came into collision with civilians he was on the soldiers' side. He made no secret of his purpose. He zealously collected relics and souvenirs of the First Napoleon, and used to expound to his friends what a new Napoleon could accomplish, who had at his command such a weapon as the German army, and who had learned from his predecessor's mistakes. Between him and his father there was no real conflict. He emphasized one aspect of the Imperial creed, and since his was also the creed of the bulk of the nation, he won a wide appreciation for his rhapsodies and a ready pardon for his excesses.

The Bismarckian construction had presupposed a succession of great Chancellors. The Hohenzollern stock might produce weaklings, but surely among the millions of Germany one strong hand could always be found to steady the helm. That hand had not been forthcoming. The Chancellor on the eve of war, the fifth since Bismarck, was Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, a fellow student of the Emperor's at Bonn, who had stolidly worked his way up through the various grades of the civil service. Less independent than Caprivi, infinitely less adroit than Prince Bülow, his chief quality was his loyalty to his Imperial master, between whom and popular criticism he was always ready to interpose

his back. His burly frame was no index to his character, for he was essentially weak, and in his grave puzzled face could be read the obstinacy which is first cousin to fear. Himself inclined to be conciliatory and pacific, he was too nondescript in his views to attract a following in any political group, too reactionary for the Radicals, too stout a Protestant to please the Catholic Centre, and not chauvinistic enough for the Conservatives. He managed the Reichstag by providing a common denominator of mediocrity, which no party liked but to which none could offer violent opposition. Honest, hard-working, and well-meaning, he was no more than a docile servant of the Emperor and of those influences which moved the Emperor, and independence was wholly foreign to his nature. The Foreign Secretary was von Jagow, formerly Ambassador at Rome, a dapper and cultivated personage and a deft official, who lacked the occasional flashes of genuine insight which had characterized his predecessor, Kiderlen-Wächter. The Under-Secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, was a more striking figure, for he had risen by sheer merit from the humblest place, and had a wide first-hand knowledge of foreign peoples. But we shall not find in all the hierarchy of laborious officials who made up the German Government any single man who had the power to play a leading part in a crisis. They were a mechanism for which the motive force was supplied by others. When the Emperor called the tune they played it according to instructions. We must look elsewhere for the governing elements in German policy.

First among these was the squirearchy of Prussia—not the great houses whose names were familiar throughout Europe, but the mass of obscure, long-descended country gentry, who were the backbone both of the army and the Hohenzollern power. They were men of another age than the present, and they had many of the antique virtues. Their narrow race-pride had made them the laughing stock of the world, and they cut an indifferent figure when they strayed beyond their ancestral acres, so that the name of Junker came to have a half-comic, half-sinister connotation. But they were the strongest stock in the German Empire. They had the fanatical loyalty of a Jacobite to the reigning house, and formed a stalwart body-guard of the throne. They provided the best of the officer class and gave the army its tone. They were honest, fearless, patriotic; they toiled laboriously at the cultivation of their estates and the work of local administration; the luxury of modern Germany had not wasted



their strength, for the majority were poor. They were survivals, reactionaries and bigots, and as such may have deserved the condemnation of the world; but their Spartan virtues assuredly did not merit its scorn.

The Army chiefs were the offspring of the squirearchy, and reproduced its temperament, calling in the latest discoveries of science to serve their ends. Prussia had always been a military state, and in modern Germany the Army counted more than with any other Power. In a later chapter we shall consider the nature of the wonderful machine which had been constructed during the past century: here it is sufficient to note the conspicuous part it played in German life. It was accepted by the people as a necessity, and revered as the foremost triumph of patriotism. In a true sense it was a national institution, and Prince Bülow was justified in claiming that its spirit was equally monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic.\* But in its essence, like all such armies, it was aristocratic, for, as Freytag-Loringhoven pointed out, quoting Napoleon and Treitschke to support him,† it depended upon the building up of an expert officers' corps, and this corps was the child of the Junkers and was permeated by their creed. That creed was "militarism" in the strict sense of a much-abused word—that is to say, they desired on the first possible chance to use their magnificent fighting weapon for the purposes of war and conquest, as a boy is anxious to test a new gun by shooting at something. Such a spirit was inevitable in an army which had won a prestige out of all proportion to the other elements in the State, and drew its strength in the main from one narrow and reactionary class. It was not a question of the policy of its chiefs: Moltke and Falkenhayn and Tirpitz mattered little compared with the powerful and arrogant caste behind them, supremely confident, organized to perfection, eager to prove its manhood in a world of weaklings. War for it had become an end in itself, a thing to be sought for its own sake, and not merely, in Clausewitz's phrase, as "a continuation of policy." On such a view the decencies of international intercourse meant nothing. "We must throw overboard," the younger Moltke said early in 1913, "all the stock commonplaces about the responsibility of the aggressor. As soon as there is a ten-to-one chance in favour of war, we must forestall our opponent, commence hostilities without more ado, and mercilessly crush all resistance." While the world still slept,

\* *Deutsche Politik*, 1916, p. 164.

† *Deductions from the World War* (Eng. tr.), p. 146.

and sanguine diplomatists were busy devising securities for peace, the Great General Staff had selected its maps of the coming battle-fields.

Next among the governing elements we may place the new kings of trade. German "efficiency" had become proverbial in the world of business. The ordinary wealth of her citizens had largely increased, and huge fortunes were common in a country which fifty years before had been noted for its poverty and simplicity. The nation in every sphere had been keyed up to a high pitch of effort, and the results were impressive. It was true that this rapid advance had been secured largely by dubious means. As the German Government financed itself by frequent loans, so German business was constructed on a gigantic basis of credit. Progress must be swift and continuous; while the machine was kept going at full power no inconvenience appeared, but if a halt or a slowing down should be necessary the equilibrium might become precarious. A system of rigid protection at home and the technical aptitude of her chemists and electricians had built up industries which, by means of her growing merchant navy, could pour their products into other lands, notably the British Empire, which had a more generous tariff system, and with the aid of Government subsidies capture not only markets for distribution, but producing grounds of raw material throughout the globe. It was a condition of things too good to last, and as the fears of other nations awoke, the German industrial magnates saw a danger of the whole edifice being undermined unless steps were taken to set it on impregnable foundations. There was another difficulty before them. German taxation was already high, and the financial burden due to the increase of the Army and Navy votes was yearly growing heavier. They foresaw that presently this expenditure would react gravely upon industry, unless the pressure of armaments were relaxed. The leaders of German finance and trade—the armament firms, the heads of the coal, engineering, electrical, and chemical industries, and great institutions like the Deutsche Bank—were, with some honourable exceptions, drifting insensibly into the view that Germany must soon realize the investments which she had been amassing for generations, and that such a realization might be best achieved by war. A short and triumphant war would relieve them of their two chief anxieties—it would lead to a world-wide prestige and unprecedented commercial expansion and the ability to dictate tariffs and trade treaties, and it would permit of a reduction in expenditure on armaments, since



German power would have been established beyond the possibility of challenge.

The trading community in any land is as a rule pacific, and undoubtedly the bulk of the German merchants looked with profound anxiety at the prospect of war. But the most pacific felt the weight of the armament taxes, and the most far-seeing were uneasy about Germany's economic future and predisposed to some heroic effort after security. Yet on the whole we may set down the rank and file of German industry as an element on the side of peace. It was otherwise with many of the merchant princes—the host of men who were part industrial magnates and part courtiers. This class was a new phenomenon in Germany. For the most part humbly born—though under the Emperor's patronage some of the great nobles had taken to dabbling in commerce—and often Jewish in blood, it had found itself exalted from social ostracism to the confidence of the Court and a large share in the national councils. It had been amazingly successful, and its success had turned its head, for the industry of the German people exploited by these *entrepreneurs* had produced results which might well leave the promoters dizzy. This megalomania affected to some extent the whole commercial class. The standard of living had changed, and extravagant expenditure on luxury had become the fashion among industrial magnates, a fashion which was reproduced in the bourgeois life of the cities. Being genuine *nouveaux riches*, they had no traditions to conform to, no perspective to order their outlook on the world. The kingdoms of the earth had fallen to them, and, like Jeshurun, they waxed fat and kicked.

There were, therefore, on the eve of war three potent elements—the Prussian squirearchy, the Army and Navy chiefs, and the industrial magnates, whose attitude to the world was inspired by the ideals of mediæval conquest. They were withdrawing from the comity of nations and wrapping themselves in truculence and vainglory. The counteractive might naturally have been looked for in the party of social reform, in the mass of plain citizens, and among the “intellectuals;” but, as it happened, these three classes were impotent to redress the balance. The Social Democrats were perpetually quarrelling with the Government, and still more zealously fighting among themselves. This was largely due to their political powerlessness, for, though the largest of German parties, the German constitution did not permit them to make their weight felt in public life. The extreme Left, led by Karl Liebknecht, preached the class war, and preferred revolution

to parliamentary methods; the Left Centre, under Kautsky, Haase and Ledebour, were parliamentarians, but refused co-operation with non-socialist parties; the Right Centre, led by Scheidemann, and the Moderate Revisionists under Bernstein repudiated revolution and sought gradual reform; the extreme Right, the Imperial Socialists, were indistinguishable from the bourgeois parties. Except for Liebknecht's coterie, all were in differing degrees nationalist in spirit. They were men uncertain of their status and shifting in their creed, and while they did homage to certain pacifist doctrines, theory to them was of less importance than tactics. It was fairly certain that a little conciliation by the Government in a crisis would array the bulk of the Social Democrats on its side. As for the ordinary German he was of an obedient temper, and the Government had drawn him so wholly into its net that the thought of opposing its will did not enter his head. The intricate system of minor decorations with which his good conduct was rewarded, and the surveillance by the State over every part of his daily life, had deprived him of all political individuality. Lastly the bulk of the "intellectuals," the teachers in the schools, the professors at the universities, the clergy, and the men of letters, were in questions of politics little more than officials, speaking from a brief. The educational hierarchy was as much a branch of the bureaucracy as the management of the post office, and the class which in Germany's dark days had roused the people by dwelling upon her ancient strength and the hope of the future, now taught the same creed in coarser accents to the greater glory of the Hohenzollerns.

But our picture of Germany is not completed when we have analyzed the elements of power in her community and sketched the formal nature of her Government. For behind everything lay an impulse to a certain view of life, a conscious creed—explicitly formulated by the few and present as a temperament in the many—to which Germans gave the name of "kultur" or civilization. More important than Emperor or General Staff or the kings of commerce was this German soul, this *Deutschtum*, the sum of subtle prepossessions, hopes and fears which the world only guessed at in 1914, but which in four years of war it came to know with bitter precision.

We have seen that Germany had made steady progress in most departments of life. But there was one conspicuous exception. In art and literature, in pure thought and in political science she had declined since 1870. The simple bourgeois Germany of the

early nineteenth century produced some of the greatest of the world's thinkers, poets, and musicians; Imperial Germany was content with mediocrities. In thought the great constructive epoch was over; philosophy had become applied and pragmatic, the handmaid of the practical world. Thinkers were unfashionable unless they could preach a topical gospel. The German equivalent of the *Wealth of Nations* was Clausewitz's classic *On War*, which explored the foundations of statecraft, and showed the intimate connection between principles and facts, a manual alike for the politician and the soldier. A thousand teachers spread his views, taken for the most part at second hand, throughout the nation, and among his disciples had been Moltke and Bismarck. The passion for deeds took the place of the old passion for truth, and history was taught as the text-book of the man of action. The preference was always for the scorner of formulas, the iron opportunist, the man who had succeeded. We can see the trait in Mommsen's *Roman History*, and in Sybel's *History of the French Revolution*, both the work of professed Liberals—a reaction against all idealism which had not its "cash value." The materialism of writers such as Mach and Haeckel produced a fruitful ground for the political seed sown by Treitschke, the historian of Prussia, by Droysen, and by soldiers such as von der Goltz and von Bernhardi, who pointed a contemporary moral. Gradually *Deutschtum* was formulated as a creed, a creed which must conquer because of its inherent vitality and which had the right to use any weapons for this lofty end. If the world was to advance, the higher must crush the lower. War to Treitschke was the "drastic medicine of the human race," and the dream of banishing it from the earth not only meaningless but immoral. "It has always been the weary, spiritless, and exhausted ages which have played with the vision of perpetual peace." The megalomania grew like a fungus. Swollen with complacency and drunk with success the exponents of Germanism came to set themselves above the human family, to regard their divine mission as freeing them from all obligations of morality and law, to demand that their altar-fires should be fed with the rights and ideals of every other people, to claim for themselves the only freedom, and to seek to make all nations dependent upon their good pleasure.

This doctrine had its roots far back in German literature and deep down in the German temperament. A craze for large syntheses had characterized the great days of German philosophy. There had always been a tendency to racial arrogance, which,

contemplating the stately progress of the Absolute Will, found its final expression up to date in modern Germany. The seeds of the new Machiavellianism—which in essence was simply an abstraction of man as a politician from the rest of his aspects, a fallacy on the same plane as the “economic man” of the Benthamites—had been sown in the earliest days of German culture. The intense specialization of German scholarship and science did not tend to produce minds with an acute sense of perspective, and sedentary folk have at all times been inclined to blow a louder trumpet than men of affairs. What Sénancour has called “le vulgaire des sages”—the narrow absorption to which pedants are prone—had long been a characteristic of German “intellectuals.” Had the thing been confined to the professors and theorists it would have undergone a steady disintegration by criticism,

“Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer,”

till it lost its power to hurt. As a literary fashion it was so preposterous as to be innocent, an essay in provincialism which was pardonable because of its absurdity. But exalt this mannerism into a faith, base on it a thousand material interests, and give it great armies to make it real, and you are confronted with a dangerous mania. Self-worshippers are harmless till they compel the rest of mankind to make the same obeisance.

The danger came from the alliance of the pedant with the practical man. German statesmen from Metternich to Prince Bülow had praised the German intellect but denied their countrymen political capacity. But now that Germany was no longer content to be a “kultur-staat” only, the politician could join hands with the doctrinaire. It was an easy and natural union, for in the classic philosophy of Germany there were elements akin to the temperament of its new supporters. German idealism, as I have said, had always been noted for its love of vast unifications, its devotion to a cosmic grandiosity. But the philosopher, beating his wings in the void, could never hope to see his dream come true till the practical Prussian, himself cast crudely in the same mould, offered his aid. Now the ideal could be made the actual, spirit and matter were become one, the City of Cecrops could be amalgamated on business lines with the City of God. In both philosopher and politician there was that *naïveté* which Renan found in the tissue of the German mind, the desire to canalize the free currents of life and reduce the stubborn complex of the organic to an artificial simplicity. Both sides in the compact gave and received.



The Prussian had his material ambitions invested with a spiritual glamour; the dreamer saw the enigma of life solved at last and the dream about to become the reality. Plato's vision had come to pass, and the philosophers were kings and the kings philosophers, but it was a perverse philosophy and a sinister kingship.

But there was more than a mere marriage of fact and theory. To glorify the union came a tempestuous poetry welling from the deeps of the Teutonic soul. Behind all the arguments of the learned and the calculations of the practical we can discern a kind of barbaric imagination, akin to the grandiosity of Wagner's music. "Thinking," wrote Madame de Staël, "calms men of other nations; it inflames the Germans." \* Something untamed and primeval came out of the centuries to invest a prudential policy with the glamour of a crusade. If a man stands on the left bank of the Rhine facing the Taunus hills he is looking away from Roman Germany to a land which was never settled by Rome. The eagles marched through the forests beyond the river, but they did not remain there, and that strong civilization which is the fibre of the Western world never took root and flourished. The thickets and plains running to the northern seas remained the home of aboriginal gods. It is long since the woods were thinned and the plains tilled, but the healing and illuminating and formative forces of the great Mediterranean culture, though their aspect might be simulated, were never reborn in the hearts of the people. The North remained a thing incalculable and unreclaimed, and its ancient deities might sleep but did not die. Some day, as Heine in 1834 told France, they would rise from their graves to the undoing of Europe. †

The recrudescence of barbarism found its prophet. Fifteen years before, there had died in a madhouse a strange genius, Friedrich Nietzsche, who passed as a philosopher, but was in truth a mystic and a poet. During his lifetime this sage was of no account in his own land. He ranked Germans with Englishmen as among the lowest of created beings; he prophesied that "the German Empire will destroy the German mind;" and even in 1914 he was scarcely idolized by his countrymen. But certain portions of his teaching, imperfectly understood and wrenched from their context, dominated their thoughts. He taught that for the truly great,

\* Cf. Heine's judgment: "L'Allemand est né bête; la civilisation l'a rendu méchant."

† The conception of Germanism as the eternal revolt against Rome, the strife of the Gothic against the Renaissance, is eloquently and candidly developed by Thomas Mann in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Berlin, 1918.

the Superman, power is the only quest, and to attain it all things are permissible. He cast contempt upon what he called "slave ethics"—that is, the morality of the Gospels, which enjoined humility and self-sacrifice. If the end is big enough everything is justified; such may be taken as the popular version of his principles. The inspiration for the national mood did not come from Nietzsche, but his writings provided its fashionable watchwords. His "magnificent blonde beast, avidly rampant for spoil and victory," became the avowed ideal of decorous professors, bland financial potentates and unimaginative army officers.

"Ye have heard how in old times it was said, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; but I say unto you, Blessed are the valiant, for they shall make the earth their throne. And ye have heard men say, Blessed are the poor in spirit; but I say unto you, Blessed are the great in soul and the free in spirit, for they shall enter into Valhalla. And ye have heard men say, Blessed are the peacemakers; but I say unto you, Blessed are the war-makers, for they shall be called, if not the children of Jahve, the children of Odin, who is greater than Jahve."

This "religion of valour" was not without its magnificence. In its essentials it was such a creed as might have been preached by some Old Testament warrior or some English Ironside. Like all doctrines which have moved the hearts of men, it was based not on whole falsehoods but on half truths. To many of its devotees it seemed the salt needed to save the world from putrefaction. As against the slack-lipped individualism of the West it set man's supreme duty to the State; instead of a barren freedom it offered that richer life which comes from service. It demanded immense vitality, immense discipline, immense self-sacrifice. The poetry in it seemed to some the necessary antidote to the materialism of Germany's success. "Technical science and inward culture, or even human happiness, have little connection with each other. In the midst of vast technical achievements, it is possible for humanity to sink back into complete barbarism." \* It embodied the longing of a race to express its national exaltation in heroic deeds. Its weakness lay in the fact that this expression of national self-consciousness was conceived as possible only at the expense of other peoples. Sacrifice and discipline were enjoined upon the German citizen as duties to his State, but the attitude of the German State towards its neighbours was one of brigandage and licence. The respect for law, which was laid down as the first virtue of the

\* Werner Sombart: *Die Deutsche Volkswirtschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, p. 134.



individual, was banished from the intercourse of nations. It may be true that "la petite morale" is the enemy of "la grande;" but the higher ethics of Germany turned out on inquiry to be merely the higher selfishness. Race pride, a noble thing in its way, degenerated fast into a kind of mania. The Germans were God's chosen people and dare not refuse their destiny. All that was good in other lands derived from Teutonic culture.\* The nations who cavilled at Germany's just pretensions must be made to kiss her feet. She was unpopular throughout the globe because of her greatness, but that mattered nothing, for she would conquer her ill-wishers. *Oderint dum metuant.*

There is no sentence in Burke more often quoted than that which forbids us to draw an indictment against a nation. But the dictum must not be pressed too far. A nation can have national vices; it can blunder as a community; and it is permitted now and then to fasten guilt upon the corporate existence which we call a people. Very notably a people may go mad, when its governing elements fall into a pathological state and see strange visions. A malign spirit broods over the waters. Something which cannot be put into exact words flits at the back of men's minds. Perspective goes, exultation fires the fancy, the old decencies of common sense are repudiated, men speak with tongues not their own. That viewless thing which we call national spirit is tainted with insanity. The mania which now afflicted Germany can be best described by the French phrase, *folie de grandeur*. As such it must be distinguished from that other vice of success, *la gloire*. The great leaders of history—Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, Cromwell, Gustavus Adolphus, Washington—have as a rule striven for a political or religious ideal which made mere fame of no account in their eyes. Others, like Alexander, have been possessed by a passion for glory, and have blazed like comets athwart the world. The perfect example is Charles XII. of Sweden, who in his short career of nineteen years followed glory alone, and drew no material benefit from his conquests. In his old clothes he shook down monarchies and won thrones for other men. Glory may be a futile quest, but it has a splendour and a generosity which raise it beyond the level of low and earthy things. Its creed is Napoleon's: "J'avais le goût de la fondation et non celui de la propriété. Ma propriété à moi était dans la gloire et la célébrité;" and to the end

\* See on this curious point especially the writings of Ludwig Woltmann and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Germany's claim to European expansion on other grounds will be found in works of the geographer Daniel, Treitschke, Paul de Lagarde, Friedrich Lange, Ernst Hasse, Nippold, etc.

of time it will be an infirmity of minds which are not ignoble. But *grandeur* is a perversion, an offence against our essential humanity. It may be the degeneration of a genius like Napoleon, but more often it is the illusion of excited mediocrities. It is of the earth earthy, intoxicating itself with flamboyant material dreams. Its heroics are mercantile, and the cloud palaces which it builds have the vulgarity of a fashionable hotel. It seeks a city made with hands and heavily upholstered. Its classic exponents were those leaden vulgarians, the early Roman Emperors, of the worst of whom Renan wrote: "He resembled what a modern tradesman of the middle class would be whose good sense was perverted by reading modern poets, and who deemed it necessary to make his conduct resemble that of Han of Iceland or the Burgraves." \* *Grandeur* has always vulgarity in its fibre, vulgarity and madness.

It would be an error to regard this obsession as universal among the German people. There were millions of plain men to whom the word "kultur" was unknown, and to whom *Deutschtum* stood only for homely and honourable things. They had no hankering after conquest and would accept no war except one of self-defence. Before such it was necessary for any bellicose government to pose as the aggrieved and not as the aggressor. There were some, too, in all classes who had diagnosed the national madness and suffered a disillusion, like Caliban's:

" What a thrice-double ass  
Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,  
And worship this dull fool ! "

But the perversion had the governing classes in its grip; specious arguments, consonant to the German temper, could be found to rally the waverers; and even those who would have shrunk from a bald statement of the creed had their minds subconsciously attuned to it. The thing was in the intellectual air, men absorbed it through every pore, and it was certain that once the barques of war were launched it would rise like a mighty wind to speed them on their way.

With a flamboyant emperor ambitious of ranking with the great makers of history, an army burning to prove its perfection to the world, an aristocracy intolerant of all ideals of democratic progress, the rulers of industry at once exultant and nervous, the popular teachers preaching a gospel of race arrogance, and throughout the nation a vague half-mystical striving towards a new destiny,

\* *L'Antéchrist.*

Germany was an unquiet member of the European family. Her unrest took shape presently in certain definite policies, but it must be remembered that these policies by no means exhausted her ambitions. As a great industrial Power she sought producing grounds for raw material under her own flag, so the quest for tropical colonies began.\* She had no desire for free autonomous dominions like Canada or New Zealand; what she sought were Crown colonies within a certain zone. As she cast her eyes about the world she found that other nations had been before her, and that few tropical lands remained for her civilizing mission. Some fragments, indeed, she had picked up—territories in East, South-west, and West Africa; Samoa and a few islands in the Pacific; the port of Kiao-chau in China, to balance the acquisitions of Britain and Japan. But these were small things, and an adequate place in the sun could only be won at this late date by the dispossession of earlier owners. She undertook a Bagdad railway with visions of a German Mesopotamia at the end of it, and a broad Germanic sphere of influence across the Middle East. She dreamed of organizing all Central Europe from the North Sea to the Ægean as a political and economic unit under her direction. A world-empire demands a navy, and this the Emperor secured from a not too willing country during the fever of Anglophobia which possessed Germany at the time of Britain's South African War. In 1900 the first Navy Bill was passed, containing in its preamble the significant words: "Germany must have a fleet of such strength that even for the mightiest naval Power a war with her would involve such risks as to jeopardize its own supremacy." Other Bills were launched on recurrent waves of Anglophobia—in 1906, 1908, and in 1912; and by the last year her navy stood second among the fleets of the world. It was a fine achievement, for it was a true navy, and not merely a floating army, which had been the original German ideal. Men like Tirpitz, Koester, and Ingenohl appreciated the meaning of a sea force and wrought assiduously till it was created. Above all she brought her army to the full limits of strength and the last pitch of preparedness. In those years the significant fact was less her diplomatic efforts after expansion, which were apt to be experimental and discursive, than her perfecting of the weapons which at the appointed time might bring the world to her feet.

\* "Colonies would only be a cause of weakness, because they could only be defended by powerful fleets, and Germany's geographical position does not necessitate her development into a first-class maritime Power."—BISMARCK, 1873.

One last factor must be noted in German psychology—the factor of fear. In all arrogance there is commonly some timidity. Germany, as a new-comer among the great Powers, was not sure of her position, and inclined to nervous self-assertion. She was haunted by the spectre of a world leagued against her to cheat her of her rights. In the mild temper of France and the friendly overtures of Britain she saw profound dissimulation and a dark conspiracy. Above all she was afraid of the great Slav Empire in the East. In introducing the last Army Bill before the war the Imperial Chancellor foreshadowed the day when *Slaventum* should fight against *Deutschtum*, and this notion, aided by Slav successes in the Balkans and by Russia's increasing prosperity, had gained firm hold of the German mind. It had some warrant from history. The Mark of Brandenburg was once the bulwark of Christendom against barbaric invaders, and Austria—the Eastern Mark—was during the whole Middle Ages and up to two centuries ago the outpost of civilization against the Hun, the Slav, and the Turk. To the German who prided himself on his race the Slav was the enemy, always rolled back and always returning, alien in church and ideals and habits and in whatever distinguishes man from man. "There arises before my eyes another civilization, the civilization of the tribe with its patriarchal organization, the civilization of the horde that is gathered and kept together by despots—the Mongolian-Muscovite civilization. This civilization could not endure the light of the eighteenth century, still less the light of the nineteenth century, and now in the twentieth century it breaks loose and threatens us. This inorganic Asiatic mass, like the desert with its sands, wants to gather up our fields of grain." These were the words of no less a man than Harnack during the first weeks of war. Fears from many sources combined with her pride to goad Germany to some desperate act of self-assertion while yet there was time. The cooler heads who formed scientifically their plans for conquest could summon to their aid this *malaise* which had fallen upon the people, this desire, half-scared, half-angry, to strike out against the enemy they knew not what. To the ordinary German the alternatives of Bernhardi and his school were becoming terribly real. It was *Weltreich oder Niedergang*—World-Rule or Downfall.



## III.

In modern Europe Austria-Hungary stood over as a relic from the Middle Ages, a remnant of the old Germanic Empire left behind in the movement towards self-conscious nationality. If Germany had alien stuff in her fabric, she was like a solid block of granite as compared with the tessellated pavement of the Hapsburg domain. Hence it would be an idle task to analyze Austria's policy and the Austrian temperament, as if they were coherent and intelligible things like Germany's or France's. The Dual Monarchy was an artificial creation held together partly by the strong hand of Germany and partly by the uneasy equipoise due to the collision of centripetal and centrifugal forces, as a tree slipping from a hillside by a movement of the soil may keep its position if the prevailing winds blow against the subsidence. When the Hapsburgs had been the bulwark of south-eastern Christendom, they had lived in harmony with their Slav subjects; but when the peril had gone and the spirit of nationalism went abroad in the world, the dissolution of the Empire was decreed. Concessions of a kind were made to the subject races, but with the blind protective instinct of an old régime the Hapsburgs clung to the essentials of autocracy; and for long prevailed because they had on their side an armed and organized minority as against a scattered and leaderless multitude.

In Western Europe, though race and language were the main determinants of nationality, State and people were bound by a thousand moral links forged during a long history. In Eastern Europe, where frontiers were younger things, and in comparatively modern times populations had frequently changed masters, the institutions of the State had not impressed themselves, and nationality had linguistic and racial rather than political foundations. German-speaking subjects of the Hapsburgs were German in thought and outlook; Czechs, Slovenes, and Slovaks had their special culture and special civic aspirations. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a museum of diverse nationalities. In Austria there were some ten millions of Germans as against more than eighteen millions of Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes. In Hungary there were under ten million Magyars as against over eleven millions of Rumanians, Croats, Serbs, Germans, and Slovaks. In each country a form of parliamentary government existed which was so arranged as to put the power into the hands of the race which was numerically the weaker. The



Empire was a union of two states, each ruled by a minority and in the interest of that minority, and it may fairly be said that the majority of the population was anti-Austrian and anti-Hungarian. The thing was an anomaly unique in Europe, and could only maintain its existence by setting one part of the people against the other. Every year it became harder for the statesmen of Vienna to keep the inorganic mass from dissolution.

The constitution of the Dual Monarchy rested upon an arrangement made in 1867 to meet the wishes of two races, the German and the Magyar. It was representative government of a farcical type, for representation bore no relation to numerical strength. Of the 516 deputies in the Austrian Parliament 233 were Germans, which meant that the German minority had to find only 26 votes outside their ranks to give them control. Had representation been fairly based on population, the Germans would have held no more than 160 seats. Again, though universal suffrage existed, it was not combined with responsible government; for the Emperor appointed the administration, and if he desired, he could, under paragraph 14 of the Constitution, govern without parliamentary sanction. In Hungary the farce was more shameless. The Parliament, apart from the Croatia-Slavonia delegation, consisted of 413 deputies, of whom 405 were Magyars and eight represented the other races, who should on the population basis have been entitled to 198 seats. Further, Hungary was the home of every kind of electoral corruption. Public funds were spent brazenly on gerrymandering elections; returns were falsified; troops were turned out to "preserve order" in doubtful districts, which meant that a reign of terror kept the Slav and Rumanian voters from the polls; and any politician who ventured to protest was likely to find himself in prison on a charge of treason. The oligarchy throughout the whole Empire used a form of popular government to establish a tyranny as complete as the most naked mediæval absolutism.

This oligarchy had none of the world-ambition of their German neighbours; they were too weak to desire more than to hold what they had. The Austrian German was an agreeable, pleasure-loving type, easily swayed from Berlin. The Magyar represented one of the toughest race stocks in Europe, proud, courageous, a lover of liberty for himself, but a despot towards others. Both Vienna and Budapest sought above all things to be maintained in their privileges. They suffered from a haunting dread of the new Slav states beyond the Danube, of the great Slav power of

Russia, and of their own malcontent Slav peoples. They hated the fashionable cant of democracy as much as any Junker, and were very ready to accept a helping hand from Germany, whose constitution was not unlike their own, who likewise scorned democracy, and who shared their fear of *Slaventum*. This alliance was made easy in the case of the Magyar, who was in temperament, if not in manners, akin to the Prussian. For Germany, too, the Dual Monarchy was a sheer necessity. Without the control of Austria-Hungary she could not realize her dream of a *Drang nach Osten*, which would provide a continuous block of territory, economically self-sufficient and strategically invulnerable, to counterbalance the sea-united British Empire. Without her friendship her flank would be turned in a European war. Hence for years in policy, in economics, and in military preparation the strong gauntlet of the Hohenzollern had guided the fumbling hand of the Hapsburg. Austria could not in the nature of things be a very docile or cordial ally, but there was no doubt about the loyalty of her governing classes. Only by the help of Germany could they defend their privileges, and it was very certain that they would never cast down their glove for war without Germany's instigation and assent.

#### IV.

The recovery of France since the disaster of 1870 had been one of the marvels of history. With her armies broken in the field, her wealth plundered or mortgaged for indemnities, her capital city in revolt, and her former system of government in ruins, it might well have seemed that she was destined to drop for a long season from the ranks of the Great Powers. She was saved from such a fate by two elements which she possessed of stubborn endurance and inexhaustible vitality. One was her soil and the people of that soil. The industry and frugality of her peasantry, their patient resolution under political earthquakes, and the sober good sense of men like Jules Grévy, who were sprung from their stock and laboured to develop the riches of their pleasant land, brought her speedily to prosperity and provided a solid foundation for the young republic. The other was her scholars and men of science, who read rightly the lesson of Germany's success. Men like Renan and Pasteur, Berthelot and Gaston Paris, Fustel de Coulanges and Duruy and Lavisse, not only upheld her reputation before the world in her darkest days, but inaugurated an intellec-

tual and educational revolution more significant than the change from Empire to Republic. The state under Grévy and Gambetta took the lead in agricultural development, and under Jules Ferry and his colleagues embarked on a vast scheme of popular instruction; and the two movements assured the stability no less than the progress of their country.

But while in France it is the countryside which has always provided the force of persistence, it is from the cities that the impulse to action has come, and the electric urban population has determined the form of her politics. Hence while the peasants went about their own business, the town-dwellers lived in a maelstrom of conflicting ideals, and the first twenty years of the new state were littered with transient ministries. The "republic of ideas" which Gambetta preached was in flat opposition to the conservatism of the rural districts, but, since both were indispensable for France, some way of harmony had to be discovered. We shall not wonder at the short and uneasy lives of French governments when we remember the vast and complex task which they had to face. The First Napoleon had given France an administrative fabric the main part of which still endured, but the gaudy façade had to be replaced by a sober republican design. The new State, born in an hour of defeat, had to create its own prestige. The first duty before French statesmen was to make strong the republic, and for long there was a grave risk that parliamentarism would degenerate into a system of venal deputies acting as provincial "bosses" and bargaining on behalf of local interests. The same danger appeared when the socialist organization claimed the right of dictating to the Government. To set the State beyond faction as the supreme authority in the land—in the words which M. Briand used in 1909, "to make the Republic so pleasant to dwell in, to raise it so high above party, that the glories of all France may be focussed in it"—was still on the eve of war the chief aim and the most urgent duty of French patriots.

Next came the task of restoring the national self respect, sorely tried by the events of 1870. The *amour-propre* of a proud people had been cut to the quick, and the lost Alsace-Lorraine stood as a perpetual reminder of their humiliation. Young men who had fought against Germany went to Africa and Asia, as explorers or soldiers, and by a thousand gallant enterprises in the wilds laid the foundation of a French colonial policy. Presently the French democracy awoke to find itself master of an empire in Indo-China, in Madagascar, and in West Africa, and with something of

hesitation but more of pride it accepted the gift. Her colonies brought France into the active world of international politics, and the alliance with Russia, of which Carnot laid the foundations in 1891, was regarded as "the diplomatic baptism of the Republic." These successes, combined with the proof which her various great *Expositions* gave of her new prosperity, did much to lift up France's heart. But she continued to walk warily in international paths. She called a halt when, as at Fashoda, she seemed in danger of conflict with other Powers. She showed no sign of arrogance or of histrionic ambition: she behaved like an invalid who patiently and by discreet stages nurses herself back to strength.

For during the forty years since 1870 she had not attained to full civic health. Perfectly integrated as a nation, she was as yet imperfectly consolidated as a state. Her public opinion swung between nationalism and extreme internationalism. She was subject to crises of nerves—fear of militarism, of cosmopolitan finance, of enemy conspiracies, of foreign dictation whether from Rome or Berlin. The result was that she was sometimes betrayed into panicky and extravagant conduct. The Dreyfus case and many incidents of her rupture with the Vatican were the consequences of an honest instinct perverted by undue excitability. She passed through these crises without grave disaster, but their recurrence was inevitable until her government became firmly rooted in the confidence and affection of the ordinary man. France is in many respects the most conservative of nations, and she has a great gift of submission to a central government; but the republic, ably as it was conducted, crept but slowly into her regard. The average Frenchman tended to be cynical about politics, and his distrust of politicians produced a certain apathy towards the State. The bourgeois was content to let the nation go its own way if there was no interference with his family and profession, and among the working classes the growth of syndicalism—which meant the dominance of a class or a trade—revealed how weak had become the conception of an overruling national interest. Nationalists there were in plenty, but theirs was a creed of sentiment and tradition, and they were equally in revolt against the whole modern business of government. Now if a central government is disconsidered it becomes weak, and may presently deserve the current contempt. The Republic was in the quandary that it had to fight the growth of a doctrinaire international socialism without the true prestige of a national Government, and that the work of politics tended more and more to be



avoided by the flower of French intellect and character, and left to *arriviste* lawyers and journalists, and—worst danger of all—to a new type, the *sans-culotte* financier, the speculating demagogue.

With such serious elements of internal weakness to handicap her, France could not but look on the troubled world-stage with anxious eyes. She had always lived close to the heart of Europe, and had a great talent for candid observation. She was served by diplomatists who had probably no living equals, and was awake to the perils drawing daily nearer. But France—the France of yesterday—had one trait peculiarly her own. At all times she was in the fullest sense a nation and a great nation, but she was not in the habit of asserting her nationality on every occasion. Being old and high-born she took many things for granted. She believed religiously in her civilization as the chief heritage of the world, but she did not go out of her way to advertise it. She had no missionary zeal, and when confronted with the noisy claims of upstarts was inclined to reply with a shrug of the shoulders. Hence to Germany she seemed effete, steeped in anti-nationalism, distracted by narrow class interests, sunk deep in matter. It was a judgment profoundly mistaken, but it had this one thing to support it, that on the eve of war a curious apathy seemed to have settled upon her. In all the tangled international tale of the past decade her sincere desire for peace had been written large. To avoid war she had made sacrifices both of right and dignity. Party politicians had been allowed to whittle at her army and navy. It was not till 1913 that an attempt was made to put her military forces on the basis which her General Staff had long demanded. She had indeed made open confession of unpreparedness as a guarantee of her honest pacificism. And yet by the autumn of 1913, through the medium of her ambassador in Berlin, she had certain information about German policy which made war probable in the near future—a knowledge not then possessed by any other Power. She may have undervalued this information, or she may have thought it the best policy to keep it to herself in the hope that the situation might change; at any rate, she did not communicate it to her neighbours. Her cool, penetrating judgment was the same as before, but the governing forces in her commonwealth seemed to have become too distracted for prompt action. For the moment a certain nervelessness had seized her, and it needed the insulting challenge of Germany to wake the ancient fire of her resolution.



## V.

In the summer of 1902 the Peace of Vereeniging brought to a close the British campaign in South Africa—a costly and ill-conducted war in which few reputations were made and many were lost. Thereafter a certain satiety with oversea politics fell upon the people of the British Islands. The dream of Imperialism—the closer union of the British race in one great pacific and organic commonwealth—lost something of its glamour. It tended to sink on its baser side to a form of race chauvinism or a scheme of commercial protection; the ideal, once so glowing, became a conventional peroration at public banquets; and the machinery of union was narrowed to perfunctory conferences of British and Dominions ministers. Imperialism had at its lowest meant a political vision extending beyond these shores, and as it faded in popular esteem, the British people inclined more and more to be absorbed in domestic problems. There had been a time in their history when, under Palmerston and Gladstone and Disraeli, foreign affairs had been an integral part of their politics and elections had been lost and won on diplomatic programmes. But for twenty years the doings of Europe had interested them little. The Imperialist who taught that Britain was an extra-European Power depending on the control of the sea, and the social reformer who regarded foreign policy as a lure to distract the nation from more urgent matters, alike contributed to this result. In 1914 the people of Britain were less alive to the significance to their own interests of what might happen beyond their borders than the humblest continental state.

Early in 1906 a Liberal Government came into office with a great majority behind them. Their mandate, so far as it could be read, was to remedy certain ancient abuses and inaugurate various overdue reforms, and they set about this task with vigour and hope. But too large a majority is a misfortune for a Government. It is apt to lead rather than to follow, and to keep it together means a strict attention to the prejudices of the often ignorant rank and file. Again, it demands a highly efficient party organization, and the party machine comes to bulk too large in the mind of ministers. Hence the new Government were in danger of emphasizing certain aspects of national policy to the exclusion of others; and as their power waxed and their party organization became more efficient, they tended to confine their interest to immediate problems and had no time to spare for more distant

views. Their leader, Mr. Asquith, held the House of Commons in his hand, and developed a singular adroitness in party management ; but his robust philosophy was apt to live in the hour, and his inclination was to wait till a difficulty became urgent before seeking a solution. It is a temperament most valuable in the head of a government in normal times, but it has grave defects in seasons of crisis. This spirit set the tone in the Cabinet, and the unwillingness to look far ahead was strengthened by the temperament of one of the strongest personalities in the Government. Mr. Lloyd George made domestic reform his special subject, and brought to it a unique gift of rhetoric and an energy not always scrupulous. By schemes which were rarely more than emotional impromptus, he roused intense antagonism and a wild enthusiasm among those who saw a Machiavellian purpose of spoliation and those who discerned the dawn of a new world. The fact that he was the most conspicuous public figure in Britain at the time switched the attention of the nation still farther away from such unfruitful topics as defence and foreign affairs. For Mr. Lloyd George's imagination, vivid and notable as it was, was essentially short-range ; his mind was wholly uninstructed in the problems of international policy, and though he was chosen in August 1911 to convey a warning to Germany after the Agadir affair, he spoke only from a brief, for there were few matters about which he knew less or cared so little. Finally, the new power of the party caucus encouraged this narrowing of view. It is the business of skilful whips to know what the people want and to see that programmes are shaped accordingly. To an electorate scared or exhilarated by the prospect of large social changes the husks of foreign policy would not be acceptable. Warnings of the probability of war would be regarded as merely a trick to distract. Expenditure on defence was a waste of money which might otherwise be spent on objects from which there was a sound return. Such matters, whether right or wrong, had no electioneering value, and the comfortable delusion was fostered that, so long as Britain chose to desire peace, peace would follow. There were men in the Government who to their honour refused to prophesy smooth things, but the cotton-wool with which the political atmosphere was thick deadened their warnings.

To increase Britain's preoccupation with her insular affairs there was the grave business of Ireland. The handling of this problem by the Government between the year 1910 and the outbreak of war must rank high among the political ineptitudes of history.

A Home Rule scheme was introduced at a time when it was necessary to win support for an unpopular budget, and when, therefore, it must inevitably have been suspected of an origin in party exigencies rather than in sober statecraft. The Arms Act had been repealed, and the majority of the Ulster population prepared to resist the proposals by war. Now if a serious and law-abiding people decide that a certain policy is so subversive of their principles and so fatal to their future that it must be met by armed revolution, it is usual for a democratic Government to call a halt and find some other way. But if the Government in its turn concludes that such resistance is factious and unreasonable and must be crushed, then it is its business promptly to arrest the ringleaders and quell the movement. Mr. Asquith's Government did neither. It allowed Ulster to raise and discipline an efficient army, and it went on with its Home Rule Bill. The Nationalists claimed the same right to arm and drill their people, and the National Volunteers came into being. The result was that by July 1914 Ireland was split up into two armed camps, and it seemed as if not even the dissolution of the Government and the disappearance of the Bill could avert civil strife.

Apart from the Prime Minister, there were two men in the Cabinet whose minds were not obsessed by those domestic policies which made the only profitable electioneering. These were Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, and Lord Haldane, who in 1912 went to the Woolsack from the War Office. Sir Edward Grey represented a very ancient and honourable type in British statecraft, a type like the Lord Althorp of the First Reform Bill—a country gentleman with no vulgar ambitions, who would greatly have preferred a private station, and entered public life solely in order to serve his country. Since his accession to office he had laboured patiently and wisely to maintain the peace of Europe, and his grave simplicity of character, his moral dignity, and his gift of sound judgment and conciliatory statement had done much to keep the tottering fabric together. On more than one occasion his personal influence had been the determining factor in averting war. No man's prestige stood higher among European courts and governments. He had brought Britain again into the European family, and by sheer good sense and fair dealing had made her influence felt in its councils. He had nourished the *entente* between Britain and France, and got rid of the few remaining causes of friction between Britain and Russia. He had attempted—apparently with some success—to reach an understanding with

Germany which would regularize and make room for her reasonable ambitions. This was a notable work, which as a personal achievement it would be hard to overrate. Nevertheless, when the rest of British policy is considered, it was a hazardous road that he trod. He had accustomed Britain to interfere in continental affairs when she was not armed on a continental scale, and when the whole apparent trend of her interest led away from matters of defence. If Germany chose to be arrogant he could not compel humility, for he had no adequate sanction behind him. To an ally he could not promise such immediate assistance as would enable her to speak with her foes in the gate. His arms were historic prestige, wealth, a great navy; but these were not *in pari materia* with those of the Powers with whom he thought to treat. He was a voice, a grave, reasonable, weighty voice, but behind it was not the appropriate weapon.

Lord Haldane had, as we shall see later, done invaluable service to the British army as Secretary for War. But he did not regard that army as a thing to be elaborated for its own sake, and his mind had always been busy with those questions of foreign relations the mismanagement of which brings in the soldier; and especially with the attitude of Germany, a country to whose thought and literature he owed, in company with many Britons, a great intellectual debt. With the consent of King Edward and of his colleagues in the Cabinet he paid a visit to Berlin in the summer of 1906, and had conversations with the Emperor and various German Ministers, in which he endeavoured to explore the possibilities of a friendly understanding. His view at the time was that, while there were dangerous forces at work within the German polity, the influence of the Emperor and his chief advisers was on the side of peace. The following year, when the Emperor visited Britain, these conversations were renewed. Then came many disturbances in the diplomatic sky, and it was suggested from Potsdam that direct intercourse between prominent statesmen of Britain and Germany might clear up certain difficulties. At the request of Sir Edward Grey, Lord Haldane went to Berlin in February 1912 on a private mission,\* when he met the Emperor, Bethmann-Hollweg, Admiral von Tirpitz and others, and went very fully into the whole international situation—the new German fleet, the African colonies, the relations of Britain with France

\* The mission was nominally "private;" but it was undertaken by Lord Haldane at the request of the Cabinet, following on a request from Berlin, and he carried the fullest credentials from King Edward and the British Government.



and other European Powers, the Bagdad railway, and all other matters of possible dispute. This visit came to be so grossly misrepresented, after the outbreak of war had roused popular suspicion, that it is necessary to be very clear as to what happened. Lord Haldane throughout his difficult task played the part of a conciliatory but most faithful British envoy, jealous alike for his country's interests and his country's honour. He stood out stiffly against Tirpitz for a modification of the German naval programme as a guarantee of good faith. He was scrupulously loyal to Britain's unwritten obligations to France. His business was to inquire, not to commit his Government, and he kept in close touch with M. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador. A provisional agreement was reached on many points, but on two subjects there could be no settlement. Germany was resolute to proceed with her new naval programme, and the magnitude of the increases provided for made it impossible for Britain to do otherwise than lay down two ships to her one. On that matter the attitude could not be agreement but watchful competition. Again, Germany insisted as a basis for an understanding upon a formula of Britain's unconditional neutrality in the event of a European war; to which Britain could not assent without a betrayal of France. The conference therefore ended with many expressions of good-will, but without practical result so far as concerned the main topics discussed. But it led to an undoubted improvement in Anglo-German relations—an improvement which continued up to the outbreak of war.

Lord Haldane returned to England with a divided mind. There were many things to disquiet him—the personality of Tirpitz and others of the War Party, the character of the new German naval law; above all, the unconditional neutrality suggestion of the formula. On the other hand, he believed that the Emperor and the civilian ministers sincerely desired peace in their then mood, and there is reason to think that in the spring of 1912 this was true. Lord Haldane—and the British Government who were advised by him—came to a definite conclusion as to their immediate policy. A great danger loomed ahead, but the cloud might pass; it was their business to do nothing which might make it discharge in a thunderstorm. They must avoid any pin-pricks, any blowing of warning trumpets in Britain; for these would be misconstrued in Germany, and would strengthen the hands of those who clamoured for war. By judicious quiescence on their part the Imperial Dr. Faustus might be prevented from making a bargain with



the Devil. Such a decision was acceptable to a Government much perplexed with domestic problems and a little weary after six strenuous years. It was acceptable to the Prime Minister, in whose philosophy of life the doctrine of "a friendly Universe" held a conspicuous place, and who considered that most political questions, if left alone, would settle themselves. It was acceptable to Sir Edward Grey, whose success as a peacemaker had inclined him to the belief that patience and good humour would tide over the worst times. It was acceptable to Lord Haldane, who had the best means of judging, and who was disposed to be optimistic about the saner elements in German life. On the information then at their disposal, and having regard to the temperament of the chief British Ministers and the complexity of the domestic situation, the decision was natural and inevitable.

History will ask searching questions. Did the British Government view the German situation correctly in 1912? To this the answer lies in the realm of hypotheticals, but it may fairly be maintained that on a matter which involved so many imponderables they judged with reasonable accuracy; at any rate, they judged honestly according to their lights, and mortals can do no more. Did the Government appreciate the change in Germany's mood which came about beyond doubt the following year? For if they did, their continued supineness was a criminal breach of public duty. The answer would seem to be that they did not; that in 1914 they still shared the hopes, already baseless, which had had a show of reason in 1912. Their minds were monopolized by the troubles they had made for themselves at home; they were badly informed, and the whole political atmosphere in which they lived was inimical to any close attention to the creeping shadows and broken lights of the European situation. It is not seemly to suggest that, had they had any inkling of the deadly peril which from the autumn of 1913 onward overshadowed the world, they would not have revised their views, flung party and prudential consideration to the winds, and warned the nation even at the cost of their disappearance from power. There were weak knees and confused heads in the Ministry, but the leaders were patriots and statesmen, who would have scorned to secure a few months' longer tenure of office at the cost of flagrant dishonour.

On one point, however, it is difficult to acquit Mr. Asquith's Government. On their own admission a great war was well within the bounds of possibility. It might precipitate such a war to sound too clamantly the note of defence, but it was certainly

folly to apply sedatives, and not to endeavour so to guide policy that the country should not be caught handicapped and unprepared. Yet during 1912, and up to the very eve of war, the latter seemed to be the Government's aim. Lord Roberts's scheme for national training, faulty as it may have been, was repelled by the ordinary Government apologist with arguments which were foolish except on the assumption that the age of Saturn had dawned. Domestic affairs, notably the Irish business, were suffered to slip into a worse confusion. Questions of defence were treated by the Government spokesmen with a strange levity and intolerance as if they were of purely academic interest. The lax discipline of the Ministry permitted members, notably Mr. Lloyd George, to preach reduction in the Navy, and the powerful Liberal caucus committed itself to a policy of rapid disarmament. In all this can be discerned the ugly trail of party spirit. The electorate must be given a programme of positive material gain that the Government might keep its affections. The Opposition had made a speciality of defence questions, and for the Government to lend a hand in the matter would have been in the eyes of many a betrayal of a mysterious abstraction called "Liberal principles," and in the eyes of every one infamously bad electioneering. Yet all the time the weightier members of the Cabinet had in their hearts the knowledge that behind the crudities of the Opposition criticism there lay a disquieting truth, and that at any moment what they labelled as scare-mongering might by the irony of fate be terribly justified as foresight. Mr. Asquith and his colleagues erred in being too optimistic about Germany and too pessimistic about their own countrymen. A Government long in office is rarely a heroic thing, and they had not the courage for even the modicum of candour necessary to steady the people. The result was that on the eve of war Britain cut a figure in the eyes of Europe which, by aggravating German arrogance, materially expedited the catastrophe. To Berlin she seemed a land on the verge of revolution, with an army disloyal to the civil power; with demagogues competing to offer doles to the proletariat; with a populace clamorous about its rights but refusing the first duty of citizenship; with Ireland on the verge of a civil war which would involve the whole Empire; a Carthage which would go cap in hand to the world seeking for peace, and had forgotten its old valour in greed of gain and a passion for smooth phrases. It was a ludicrous misreading, but there seemed good evidence for it to the clumsy German psychologists. And of one fact in the summer of 1914 Germany was assured,

and rightly assured: of her two great future enemies France was awake but unready, and the British people were neither ready nor awake.

## VI.

It remains to sketch briefly the political events which directly prepared the way for the cataclysm. German diplomacy, when in the late 'eighties it set itself seriously to assert Germany's international position, had two facts to start from—the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy; and a very real suspicion and a permanent possibility of friction among the three remaining Powers of Europe, France, Russia, and Britain. Its first efforts seemed to be directed by no settled plan, and to be guided only by the principle that in all international activity Germany must have a share.\* The co-operation with Russia in depriving Japan of the fruits of her victory over China in 1895; the long intrigue with Turkey over Anatolia; the Emperor's theatrical Syrian tour; the German leadership of the Allied force dispatched to China in the Boxer rising; the attempt to sow dissension between Britain and America during the latter's war with Spain in 1898; the Emperor's telegram to President Kruger after the Jameson Raid—are examples of how earnestly and unintelligently Germany went about the task of making herself felt throughout the world. The first Navy Bill of 1900 provided the nucleus of an armoury for this forward policy. It naturally alarmed her neighbours and disposed ancient rivals to make protective alliances. Under the influence of King Edward VII. the foundations had been laid of a friendship between Britain and France. Early in 1904 this resulted in a formal agreement, under which all outstanding disputes were settled, France recognized British supremacy in Egypt, and Britain withdrew her objections to French expansion in Morocco. To Germany this seemed a slight to her magnificence, for an international question of the first importance had been settled without her being consulted. The view was not without reason. The original Convention of 1880, to which Germany had been a party, was revised in various important points by the 1904 agreement concluded between France and

\* "Nothing could be more strongly opposed to Germany's interest than to enter upon more or less daring and adventurous enterprises, guided merely by the desire to have a finger in every pie, to flatter the vanity of the nation, or to please the ambitions of those who rule it."—BISMARCK, 1897.

Britain alone. She waited her time to vindicate her wounded pride.

France, as we have seen, had had since 1891 an alliance with Russia. In the autumn of 1904 the Russo-Japanese War broke out, and in a few months it was plain that Russia was to be defeated. In the spring of 1905 Prince Bülow suggested to his master that the occasion had come for a dramatic *coup* to restore his country's damaged prestige. As we have seen, Germany had a certain case, but she put herself in the wrong by her method of vindicating it. On the last day of March the Emperor landed with a large retinue at Tangier, proclaimed the integrity of Morocco, and promised the Sultan to defend his independence. He demanded that the whole Moroccan question should be reopened. A weak cabinet in Paris bowed to the storm, and M. Delcassé, the Foreign Minister, fell from office. A conference of the Powers was summoned at Germany's instigation, but the result for her was a bitter disappointment. The legend of the "Concert of Europe" was shattered, and she was revealed as, except for her faithful Austria-Hungary, alone in the world. Britain and Russia stood solidly behind France; Italy deserted her colleagues of the Triple Alliance and supported her Latin neighbour. The Algeciras arrangement of April 1906 provided no lasting settlement, but it made clear the new grouping of the European peoples. Germany had failed to drive France from Morocco or to enter that country herself, and she had irritated and alarmed the world by showing too nakedly her hand. It was certain that she would look forthwith for fresh methods to aggrandize her pride, and would have to rely mainly upon herself. Italy was drifting from her side, and her rivals were coming closer together. The new Liberal Ministry in Britain had accepted the foreign policy of their predecessors, and the following year they signed with Russia an agreement which completed the Triple Entente.

The next German *coup* was more adroitly handled. In the summer of 1908 the old régime in Turkey was swept away by revolution, the Young Turk party came into power, and by their liberal professions attracted for a little the sympathy of Western Europe. At first the change seemed against Germany's interest, for she had sedulously cultivated the Hamidian Government, and would have to begin again from the beginning. But she saw a chance of fishing profitably in the troubled waters. Austria seized the occasion to annex the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of which she had long had the administration. Serbia was



alarmed, for she saw her hope of union with the Bosnian Serbs extinguished. Russia, as Serbia's protector, shared her annoyance at this annulment of the work of the Congress of Berlin, and Italy was disquieted by Austria's advance southward into the Balkan peninsula. But Austria had Germany at her back, and the protests of the Triple Entente were met with a cool contempt. The Emperor William made his famous speech about Germany's "shining armour," and the Entente, unprepared for a European war in such a cause, had to acquiesce with the best grace it could muster. It was a proof of the solid foundations of the friendship between France, Britain, and Russia that it survived unimpaired this diplomatic humiliation. But the Austro-German success had a disastrous effect on the Triple Alliance, and Italy drew farther apart from her colleagues.

The first German move had failed at Algeiras; the second had succeeded; the third was to end in a fiasco. It came in the spring of 1911. There had been a revolt in Fez, and French troops had entered the city. To Germany it seemed that the Shereefian Empire was on the point of breaking up, and she was determined to share in the spoils. If France was to have the reconstruction of the land, Germany must have territorial compensation; in the words of Kiderlen-Wächter, "If one wants to eat peaches in January one must pay for them." The gunboat *Panther* was dispatched to Agadir, and the German press claimed West Morocco as their country's right. But France in 1911 was not the France of 1905. M. Caillaux, who showed signs of temporizing with Germany, was swept from power, and the new Ministry, under Raymond Poincaré, included Delcassé, who was not inclined to truckle to Berlin. Britain sent a warship to Agadir to lie alongside the *Panther*, and proclaimed in unmistakable terms her support of France. Germany, not yet ready for a world-war, abated her pretensions, and the Moroccan dispute was settled by various cessions of territory in Central Africa between France and herself. No German considered the arrangement as final, and the rebuff roused in Germany a fury of resentment against France and not less against her ally Britain. From that moment the war party dropped all talk of compromise and preached naked aggression. With Agadir we may say, looking back from the standpoint of accomplished fact, that all hope of peace vanished from Europe, though it was given to few to read the omens truly. Close on its heels followed the war between Italy and Turkey. Italy was not unnaturally anxious lest Germany, foiled in Morocco, might seek



compensation on the Tripoli coast, and the confusion of the Young Turk régime gave her a good excuse for action. Austria and Germany alike viewed her conduct with profound irritation, and the Triple Alliance had now become the shadow of a shade.

In February of the following year, 1912, Lord Haldane, as we have seen, paid his visit to Berlin, and found certain features which gravely disquieted him. War appeared to be contemplated as an early possibility by powerful factions, but the Government and the Emperor were not yet committed to their side, and there seemed to him to be still a good chance of the fever subsiding. But that autumn a new irritant appeared in south-eastern Europe. The Balkan War began—a war which Germany expected to issue in a decisive victory for Turkey. The result was far different, and dealt a final blow to Austria's hopes of a port in the Ægean and to Germany's dream of a gradual and painless absorption of the Ottoman Empire. The most that the Central Powers could do was to muddy the waters of diplomacy, and prevent the settlement after the two wars from being more than a patched-up truce. But certain consequences remained. A new and formidable Slav Power now stood in the way of Germany's *Drang nach Osten*, and behind loomed Russia, the protector of the Slav peoples. Such a situation drove Germany, still sore over Morocco, to reflect most seriously on her position. She saw the various avenues to world-power, on which she had based her plans, rapidly closing up. The Near East might soon be shut by the new Slav renaissance; the Far East was too dangerous with Japan at its door. South America was barred to her adventures by the United States, and most of the rest of the world by Britain. Her navy had come to maturity, and was eager to win laurels. She was already the greatest military Power on earth, and ere the Balkan Wars were over had increased her total peace strength to 870,000 men. She saw the Triple Entente solidifying into an alliance—an alliance accompanied by a surprising growth of sympathy and good will between the three constituent nations. She was afraid of Britain's naval strength and the twenty-million addition to Britain's naval estimates; it seemed intolerable to her, as a World-Power, that any single nation should be so omnipotent at sea. She did not appreciate the necessities of an island Power, administering a world-wide Empire, but read ambition into schemes based only on administrative needs and the desire for a modest security. It was an error, but we may admit it to have been a pardonable error, for Britain's naval policy has often been misconstrued, by her friends as well as by her foes.

To Germany it appeared that her neighbours sought to isolate her, to ring her round with hostile alliances, and then overwhelm her under the weight of an armed coalition. Her forward policy, begun under the impulse of national self-confidence, began now to quicken its pace under the influence of baseless but not wholly unnatural fears. The inevitable protective measures of Europe under the threat of her restless ambition were easy to distort into a malign conspiracy against her freedom, and as such, of set purpose, they were represented by the leaders of Germany to the German people.

The year 1913 marked the turning-point in her destiny. In September 1912 Marschall von Bieberstein, the German Ambassador to Britain, had died, and his successor was Prince Lichnowsky, a Silesian noble, whose views of German policy differed widely from those of the ruling clique in Berlin. He disbelieved utterly, as Bismarck disbelieved, in espousing Austria's quarrels and in Germany's Balkan and Near East adventures, and would have had his country expand overseas in friendship with France and Britain. "The policy of the Triple Alliance," he afterwards wrote, "is a return to the past, a turning aside from the future, from Imperialism and world-policy. 'Middle Europe' belongs to the Middle Ages; Berlin-Bagdad is a blind alley and not the way into the open country, to the unlimited possibilities, to the world-mission of the German nation." He made himself popular in English society, and he worked assiduously with Sir Edward Grey to reach an agreement on certain international questions, the chief of which were the Portuguese colonies and the Bagdad railway. Treaties were prepared or discussed under which Britain agreed to permit Germany to purchase Portugal's African possessions, when Portugal was willing to sell, and in the meantime to regard them as a legitimate German sphere of influence; in which she agreed to the completion of the Bagdad line to Basra, and to the recognition of Germany's dominant interest in all the district tapped by the railway. It was an immense concession, but in spite of Lichnowsky's efforts the treaties were not signed in Berlin. The reason was simple. Germany could not afford to publish to the world this proof of Britain's good will towards her overseas expansion; for in 1913 her rulers had decided to play for higher stakes by the game of war.

That year saw the completion of the first twenty-five years of the Emperor's reign, and the Jubilee celebrations, with their awakening of historical memories, caused a sudden surge of pride

to arise in the German people, and inflamed the ambition of the Imperial mind. The time seemed to have come to make a settlement with rivals, not by the humiliating processes of diplomacy, but by the summary power of the sword. It was the year of the new German Army Law, and every military chief, from the younger Moltke downward, was busy with arrogant defiances to the world. As early as April the French Government received a secret report setting forth the purposes for which the greatly increased army of Germany was to be used, and each sentence showed that war was contemplated at the first convenient moment. In November the Emperor told the King of the Belgians at Potsdam that he looked upon war with France as "inevitable and close at hand." About the same time M. Jules Cambon warned his Government that the balance had now clearly swung to the side of the War party, and that the Emperor was with them. No exact date can be fixed for this momentous change. It was doubtless a gradual process, at first a subtle altering of outlook and perspective which slowly drew to a conscious policy. So far as we can judge William's mind, he did not then conceive of the coming conflict as a world-conflagration: Britain would stand out—on that point Germany, plentifully supplied with the reports of her secret agents, was positive; France, if it came to war, would speedily be broken; and after some sullen fighting on the Eastern frontier the Slav peril would be checked. Germany would emerge as indisputably the greatest of the Powers, heavy indemnities would pay her bills, and her mailed diplomacy would not be denied in future conclaves of the peoples. The Emperor's decision, granting his character, could scarcely have been otherwise. He had raised a genie that he could not control. The blunders at Agadir and in the Balkans had been credited to him; for if he claimed Germany's successes as personal achievements, he must also take the blame of her failures. He saw his position imperilled, and half from fear and half from wounded vanity inclined his ear to those who clamoured for violence.

But the right occasion must be found. Austria was straining at the leash, for the result of the Balkan campaigns had given her good cause to fear for the foundations of her rickety dominion. The ink was barely dry on the Treaty of Bucharest when she proposed to Italy to attack Serbia. Italy declined, and it is certain that Germany would in any case have forbidden this piece of brigandage, for she saw that the coming war must be skilfully stage-managed, and must be represented to her people and to the

world as a war of defence. Besides, the widening of the Kiel Canal, on which her naval strategy depended, would not be completed till the following summer. She did not wish to force the struggle by any sudden violence on her part. Her rulers had resolved to fight, and to fight before France and Russia were ready; there were therefore limits to their period of waiting, but they were confident that at no distant date they would find the kind of pretext they required. Meantime, secretly and patiently, they prepared the ground. During the first months of 1914 there were many discussions among the statesmen of the Central Powers, of which only faint echoes have reached the world: steps taken by certain financial houses, especially connected with German and Austrian state business, as early as May of that year, point to a premonition based on some hint from exalted quarters. The German mind was excited by a calumnious press campaign against Russia and France, while the anxiety of Britain was lulled by pacific declarations.

And then suddenly, on the 28th of June, came the news from Serajevo, and the time of waiting was ended.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE BREAKING OF THE BARRIERS.

*June 28—August 4, 1914.*

The Immediate Results of the Serajevo Murders—Germany's Council of War on 5th July—Austria's Ultimatum to Serbia—The Russian Mobilization—Germany's Proposal to Britain—The Work of Sir Edward Grey—Germany mobilizes—The Ultimatums to France and Belgium—The Invasion of Belgium—The British Cabinet—Britain declares War.

At first the Serajevo tragedy seemed destined to be only a nine days' wonder. The victims were hurried into their graves; the coffins were borne through Vienna by night, the service in the Burg chapel was short and perfunctory, the burial in the rain at the castle of Arstetten might have been the funeral of a minor noble, and the stately ceremonial which marked the sepulture of the Hapsburgs was wholly omitted. The murderers went through a lengthy and farcical trial, as a result of which the two principals, Prinzip and Gabrinovitch, escaped the death penalty, while several obscure accessories were hung. But though the dead Archduke and his wife seemed to be speedily forgotten, the press and the politicians of Vienna and Budapest exploited the murders to the utmost for their own ends. Throughout almost every land they found a ready sympathy. The crime had been most shocking and barbarous, and left the worst impression upon a world which had not forgotten the tragic end of King Milan and Queen Draga. The complicity of the Serbian Government was assumed in many quarters, and even the better instructed, who had no special love for Austria, were ready to admit that she had here a genuine grievance. She might be reactionary and inept, but across the Danube was a movement which threatened the integrity of her dominions and her very existence as a Great Power. No state could be expected to forgo the right of self preservation. The public opinion of Western Europe would have been on her side had she demanded from Serbia the most stringent guarantees

for the future; but the public opinion of Western Europe did not probe the matter very deep. France and Britain were at the moment desperately involved in their own domestic affairs.

Russia, alone of the Entente, was from the first seriously perturbed. In a later chapter we shall consider her internal condition; here we are concerned only with her foreign policy. That policy was, from the nature of her interests, essentially pacific. She desired no extension of territory, for her need was intensive development. But, as the greatest Slav power, she recognized certain obligations to the Slav peoples beyond her borders. She could not allow the little Balkan States to be swallowed up in a Teutonic advance towards the Bosphorus, and, as the protector of the Greek Church, she was obliged to resent any ill treatment of Orthodox believers in other lands. She had as a people no bellicose aims, and could be drawn into war only in three contingencies—an assault upon a Slav nationality, the persecution of the Greek Church outside her frontiers, or an attack upon her ally France. The second had been long a source of uneasiness to her statesmen, and the first was suddenly brought into prominence by the events of Serajevo. She was gravely shocked by the crime, and advised Serbia to accept with a good grace all possible Austrian demands. What these might be no man outside Austria-Hungary and Germany knew for the better part of a month. The reports from the different embassies were conflicting, but there were two ominous signs. One was the inspired truculence of the Austrian press, which seemed bent on inflaming popular opinion; the other was the cryptic speeches of the German Ambassador in Vienna, Herr von Tschirschky, who proclaimed to all whom he met that now Austria must settle with Serbia once and for ever.

On the 5th day of July a meeting was held at Potsdam at which the situation was discussed and the outline of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia decided upon. In spite of denials it is beyond question that the meeting took place. We know that the Emperor was there, and the Imperial Chancellor and Zimmermann from the Foreign Office,\* and we know that an autograph

\* This much has been admitted by Jagow (*Ursachen und Ausbruch des Weltkrieges*, 1919), who denies that the meeting was a "Crown Council." Technically, no doubt, it was not, but it was a Council of War. The story was first published in September 1914 by the Dutch paper the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, and revived in July 1917 by some of the German Socialist delegates to the Stockholm Congress, when it was officially denied by the German Government. Prince Lichnowsky, who had the best means of knowing, affirms in his memorandum the holding of a Council. Baron Wangenheim, the German Ambassador at Constantinople, told Mr. Morgenthau, the American Ambassador, of the meeting, at which he said he had been present,

letter from the Emperor Francis Joseph, presented to the Emperor that morning by the Austrian Ambassador, was discussed, and that the result of the deliberations was to promise German support to Austria in the most peremptory and extreme demands upon Serbia. Some suspicion of what was coming was in the mind of the Russian Government, for M. Sazonov, the Foreign Minister, some time before 6th July, sent for Count Czernin, the Austrian Chargé d'Affaires, and warned him that any unreasonable attitude taken up by his country to Serbia could not leave Russia indifferent. On the 6th the German Emperor left for his usual summer yachting trip in Norwegian waters—a trip which had the double advantage of advertising to the world the remoteness of Germany from a Balkan squabble, and of getting a difficult personage off the scene. Next day there was a Cabinet Council in Vienna, to consider the report of the Austrian Ambassador to Berlin on the interview with the Emperor on the 5th. The assurance that Germany was behind them in a bellicose policy encouraged the ministers, under the guidance of Count Berchtold, to present to Serbia an impossible ultimatum, and risk the consequences. Only one voice, that of Count Tisza, was raised in opposition. He foresaw that the conflict would spread, and deprecated the optimism of his light-hearted colleagues. A week later Herr von Weisner, who had been sent by Vienna to Serajevo to report on the murders, wired to his Government that the complicity of Serbia was “proved by nothing and cannot even be suspected.” The views of this honest witness were disregarded. On the 19th, as we know from Tisza's admissions, a joint conference was held of Austrian and Hungarian ministers, and the text of the ultimatum was framed.

At this conference no representative of Germany was present,

and explained the decisions taken. Bethmann-Hollweg in his book (*Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege*, 1919) limits those present to himself and Zimmermann. Tirpitz, who was not there, adds Falkenhayn, the Minister of War, and Lyncker, the chief of the Military Cabinet (*Erinnerungen*, 1919). The researches of Herr Kautsky among the documents at the Wilhelmstrasse show that Count Hoyos arrived with a letter from Francis Joseph early on the morning of the 5th; that it was presented to the Emperor by Count Szogyeny and read by him before luncheon; that the Emperor summoned Bethmann-Hollweg and Zimmermann to Potsdam and discussed the Austrian proposals with them during the afternoon; that later in the day he saw Falkenhayn and Lyncker; that early on the 6th he saw Admiral von Capelle and Captain Zenker from the Admiralty, as well as representatives of the General Staff and the War Ministry, when it was resolved to take preparatory measures for war; that in the afternoon the Chancellor and Zimmermann saw Count Hoyos and informed him that Germany agreed that the time had come for drastic action in the Balkans and would support her in any decision she took. Count Berchtold announced this message on the 7th to the Council of Ministers at Vienna.

but that Germany at this early date was cognizant of the terms of the document is clear beyond possibility of doubt. Her Government avoided seeing the final text before presentation, so that they might deny previous knowledge, but the denial was a quibble, for they were fully informed from the start as to its substance. Dr. Mühlron, then a director of Krupps, learned from Dr. Helfferich, then a director of the Deutsche Bank, the main provisions of the ultimatum about the 15th of July, and was told moreover the very day on which it was to be presented at Belgrade. There seems at the time to have been some nervousness in the circles of German high finance about the wisdom of giving *carte blanche* to Austria, lest the fumbling hands of Vienna should bungle the business. But the final evidence is in a letter from Count von Lerchenfeld, the Bavarian Minister in Berlin, to his chief, Count Hertling, at Munich. This document, which was written on 18th July, contains the following sentences :

“ The step which the Cabinet in Vienna has resolved to take in Belgrade, namely the delivery of the Note, will take place on the 25th July. Action has been postponed until this juncture because of the desire to await M. Poincaré's and M. Viviani's departure from St. Petersburg, in order to make it difficult for the Entente to arrive at an understanding and to counter-act. In Vienna, until then, a show of peaceful disposition is to be made. . . . It is obvious that Serbia cannot accept such conditions, which are inconsistent with her dignity as an independent State. The consequence must therefore be war. It is absolutely agreed here that Austria should take advantage of this favourable moment, even at the risk of further complications. . . . The opinion here is general that it is Austria's hour of fate. For this reason, in reply to inquiry from Vienna,\* the declaration was immediately made here that any action upon which Austria may resolve will be agreed to, even at the risk of war with Russia. The free hand which was given to Count Berchtold's *Chef de Cabinet*, Count Hoyos, who arrived in Berlin to deliver the detailed memorandum, was so extensive that the Austrian Government was authorized to negotiate with Bulgaria regarding her joining the Triple Alliance. . . . With reference to the Kaiser travelling in a foreign country, and the Chief of the General Staff and the Prussian War Minister being on furlough, the Imperial Government will declare that it was as much surprised as the other Powers by Austrian action.”

Rarely has a conspiracy been more fully exposed. Germany at once took secret steps which in any other land would have been the equivalent of mobilization. As early as July 21st she

\* This can only refer to the meeting at Potsdam on July 5th.



ordered the recall of certain classes of reservists ; then of German officers in Switzerland ; and on the 25th she strengthened the Metz garrison. Meantime M. Sazonov, unaware that the thing was already beyond argument, directed the Russian representative in Vienna on the 22nd to warn Austria against unreasonable claims on Serbia. A few days before he had told the German Ambassador in Petrograd, Count Pourtalés, that while Russia earnestly desired peace, she could not admit that Austria had any more right to blame Serbia for pan-Slavonic agitation within Austrian borders, than she would have to charge Germany or Italy with the responsibility for exciting pan-German and pan-Italian propaganda. This warning shows that M. Sazonov saw where the danger lay. If the Serajevo crime was made the sole matter in dispute, Serbia, having clean hands, could go very far in compliance. But if the whole southern Slav question were to be raised, the difficulties might well be insurmountable.

On Thursday the 23rd of July—two days before von Lerchenfeld's date—the Austro-Hungarian Government presented its ultimatum to Belgrade. To all the world, except the Teutonic Powers, it came as a veritable thunderbolt. The lengthy document contained a number of drastic demands, devised partly as a reparation for the Serajevo murders and partly as a safeguard for the future. A reply was requested within forty-eight hours—that is, by six o'clock on the evening of Saturday the 25th. The matter in dispute was not the Archduke's death, which was treated as only the last of a long chain of grievances. Austria asked not for Serbia's co-operation in punishing the assassins, but for her degradation to the position of a vassal state. She took credit for her moderation, because she did not seek any surrender of territory ; in reality she demanded the submission of all Serbia to her protectorate. She had chosen her moment cunningly. While a reply was pending each capital of the Entente was in the throes of a domestic crisis, and had little leisure to grapple with the new peril in the East. Petrograd was paralyzed by a huge strike, and had barricades in her streets. Paris was in the midst of the trial of Madame Caillaux for the murder of M. Calmette, and absorbed in what promised to be the worst political scandal since the Dreyfus case. To add to the confusion, President, Premier, and Foreign Minister were at the moment absent from France. In Britain the Buckingham Palace Conference on the Ulster question broke down on the 24th, and to many people there seemed no way out of the tangle but civil war.

Faced with this crisis, Serbia appealed to Russia. Meantime certain significant events had happened. The German Ambassadors at Paris, London, and Petrograd called upon the French, British, and Russian Foreign Ministers, and announced that Germany, though she had had no previous knowledge of it, approved the form and substance of the Austrian note, adding that, if the quarrel between Serbia and Austria were not localized, dangerous friction might ensue between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. What was the meaning of this curious act, in which Germany first publicly arrayed herself behind the Dual Monarchy? M. Jules Cambon at the moment thought that the German and Austrian Governments believed that a bold bluff would paralyze Russia, as in 1908. But M. Sazonov's handling of the situation thus far had given them no ground for such a delusion. Nevertheless at the time both Jagow and Tschirschky were busy assuring their fellow diplomats that the storm would blow past and that the peace of Europe was not really endangered. We can only set it down as part of the game which had been agreed on; optimism about peace would help to convince the world that Germany was honestly in favour of a reasonable settlement, and would make it easier to put aside with fair words any later proposals to avert that war on which she was resolved. The Foreign Ministers of Russia and France were not deceived; and if Sir Edward Grey was less clear, he seems to have shared the uncertainty with Prince Lichnowsky himself. On the latter's suggestion he advised Serbia to make such a reply as would prevent Austria from taking summary action. He advised M. Sazonov to request from Vienna an extension of the forty-eight hours' limit. The Russian Minister was anxious that Britain should at once declare her union with Russia and France in the event of war, arguing logically enough that, if Germany were bluffing, such an action would expose the bluff, and that, if she were in earnest, sooner or later Britain would be drawn into the struggle. But at the time, with Britain profoundly ignorant of the whole question, such a course would have been impossible for a British statesman. On the morning of the 25th Austria refused to extend the time limit, and that evening at a quarter to six Serbia made her reply.

She had followed exactly Russia's counsel. She had gone to the extreme limit of complaisance and accepted substantially all the Austrian demands with two reservations, on which she asked for a reference to the Hague Tribunal. These concerned Articles 5 and 6 of the Note. Article 5 required her "to accept

the collaboration in Serbia of representatives of the Austro-Hungarian Government in the suppression of the subversive movement directed against the territorial integrity of the Monarchy." Serbia replied that she did not clearly understand this request, but would admit such collaboration as agreed with the principles of international law and her own criminal procedure. Article 6 asked for judicial proceedings against the accessories to the Serajevo plot, in which police officials of the Austro-Hungarian Government should take part so far as the preliminary inquiries were concerned. Serbia replied that she could not accept this, as it would be a violation of her constitution, though she was willing that the details of any investigation she conducted should be laid before the Austrian agents. Obviously in this contention she was right. The complete acceptance of the Austrian demands would have meant that she surrendered her independent nationality and her privileges as a sovereign state, and that Austria extended her authority to the Greek and Bulgarian frontiers.

The Note was in the nature of a rhetorical question; it did not expect an answer. Had Serbia yielded on every point, another Note would no doubt have followed in still more exorbitant terms, for Austria was determined to pick a quarrel. At a quarter to six on the Saturday evening, M. Pasitch, the Serbian Prime Minister, delivered the answer in person at the Austrian Legation. It may be doubted whether that answer was read. He had scarcely returned to his office ere he received a message that the reply was unsatisfactory, and at 6.30 p.m., or forty-five minutes after the receipt of the Serbian answer, Baron Giesl and his staff left Belgrade. Two days later the Viennese Government published a manifesto explaining why they rejected Serbia's offer, perhaps the weakest state paper ever issued to the world. Austria at this juncture did not play her cards with skill; she had written her purpose so large that even the dullest could read it. Meantime Serbia took thought for the future. She transferred the seat of government to Nish, for Belgrade was under the Austrian frontier guns, and that evening gave the order for a general mobilization. The Dual Monarchy mobilized at once its corps in Hungary, Central Austria, and Bosnia-Dalmatia—eight completely and four partially, a total of half a million men—and moved them towards the Serbian border.

Next day, Sunday the 26th, there began that feverish week of diplomatic effort which constitutes as dramatic an episode as modern annals can show. The chief part was played by the

British Foreign Secretary, whose labours for peace up till the last moment were of incalculable value in establishing the honesty of purpose of the Entente in the eyes of neutral peoples. His first step was to approach Germany, France, and Italy, with a view to calling a conference in London to mediate in the Austro-Serbian quarrel. M. Sazonov, too, on that day made another appeal to Vienna. Sir Edward Grey met with a cordial response from Paris and Rome, but from Berlin he was informed that Germany would have nothing to do with any conference. He returned to the charge and proposed that, if the principle of mediation was accepted, Jagow himself should suggest the lines on which it should be conducted. From Vienna M. Sazonov received on the 28th a peremptory refusal to negotiate further with Serbia, and the announcement that that day Austria had declared war. Meantime on the 26th two incidents had happened, both of them with a direct bearing on the future course of events. There had been a riot in Dublin attended by loss of life, when troops of the King's Own Scottish Borderers had come into conflict with gun-runners from the Nationalist Volunteers. To the German agents, and notably to Kuhlmann, one of the chief officials at the Embassy, it seemed that civil war in Britain had begun. That evening, too, the German Emperor, his Norwegian trip concluded, returned to Berlin.

It would appear that the rapid action of Austria, now that it was an accomplished fact, compelled the civilian statesmen of Germany to reflect. They had determined upon war, but they did not wish to drop the mask of reasonableness, and a lingering prudence made them seek to limit the coming conflict. They must stand in the eyes of their own people and of the world as the aggrieved not the aggressors; above all, they wished to do nothing that might bring Britain into the arena against them. At the same time, owing to the reports of Count Pourtalés (the most foolish figure in the not very brilliant German *corps diplomatique*), they seem to have imagined that Russia would not fight under any circumstances, and the same delusion was strong in Vienna. Accordingly they adopted the pose of trying to moderate Austria's precipitation. On the evening of the 28th the Imperial Chancellor sent for the British Ambassador and opened his heart to him. His view was that the quarrel with Serbia was purely Austria's business, with which Russia had no concern; he could not accept the conference suggested by Sir Edward Grey, for that would look like sitting in judgment on sovereign Powers; but a war among the Great Powers must be avoided, and he was



very willing to co-operate with Britain to this end. He was anxious for direct negotiations between Vienna and Petrograd, and was advising Vienna accordingly. We know from other sources what this advice was. He told Austria not to refuse further conversations, to seize Serbian territory as a guarantee, but to explain to Russia that she did not intend permanent annexation. In this there was no hint of concession. The impossible Austrian demands remained, and Serbia, though not annexed, would still be brought into a state of vassalage. The action was part of the elaborate hypocrisy by which Germany hoped to mislead Britain. The Imperial Chancellor wished it to be known that he was attempting to restrain Vienna, but he concealed the details of his feeble persuasion. On the afternoon of the 29th Sir Edward Grey very seriously and courteously warned Prince Lichnowsky of the dangerous waters to which Germany was steering. "The situation was very grave. While it was restricted to the issues at present actually involved, we had no thought of interfering in it. But if Germany became involved in it, and then France, the issue might be so great that it would involve all European interests; and I did not wish him to be misled by the friendly tone of our conversations—which I hoped might continue—into thinking that we should stand aside."

The centre of interest now moves for the moment to Russia. On Wednesday the 29th, after Austria's declaration of war on Serbia, orders were given for a partial Russian mobilization, affecting the districts of Kiev, Odessa, Moscow, and Kazan, which were nearest to Austria. That day the bombardment of Belgrade began, the German High Sea Fleet had been recalled from Norway, Belgium had taken certain military steps in self-defence, and in the British Fleet all manœuvre leave had been cancelled and concentration was proceeding. It was the beginning of the final stage of the crisis, and its twenty-four hours passed in such a tension as Europe had never known. The two storm centres that day were in Petrograd and Berlin.

On the evening of the 28th, forty hours after his return, the German Emperor dispatched a telegram to the Tsar. Hitherto they had been on terms of intimacy, had addressed each other by pet names in their correspondence, and at various times the Hohenzollern had advised his brother monarch how to establish a reverence for autocracy by devices little suited to the Romanov temperament. He now appealed to their old friendship and the common interest of kings in punishing the murder of those in high

places and stamping out anarchy. At 1 p.m. on the 29th the Tsar replied, begging the Emperor to restrain Austria from going too far, since "in Russia the indignation, which I share, is tremendous." That afternoon the order went out for partial mobilization, though Sukhomlinov, the Minister of War, and Januschkevitch, the Chief of the General Staff, considered that in view of the threatening outlook the mobilization should be general. Immediately afterwards M. Sazonov had an interview with Count Pourtalés. That light-witted diplomat, who had just had news of the mobilization, adopted a hectoring tone. He reminded Sazonov that Austria was Germany's ally, and that any threat to the former could not leave the latter unaffected. There was a second interview at 7 p.m., when he produced a telegram from Bethmann-Hollweg, which, as interpreted by him, announced that any further military preparation by Russia would compel Germany to mobilize, and that that meant war. Count Pourtalés had presented Russia with an ultimatum.

M. Sazonov was gravely perturbed. The Russian partial mobilization against Austria had begun, and Germany was about to make this a *casus belli*. It seemed to him that nothing was now left but to prepare on the full scale for war. He consulted Sukhomlinov and Januschkevitch, and found them of the same mind. They had already acted on their own initiative, and issued secret instructions for a general mobilization. It was a highly improper act, however patriotic the motives, but it is not difficult to understand their reasoning. The partial mobilization did not affect the biggest army group, that of Warsaw, which for two hundred miles lay along the Galician frontier; and if war with Austria was inevitable, then this group must be set in motion at once. Nevertheless their duplicity had involved the innocent Foreign Minister in a misstatement of fact to Count Pourtalés. After 7 p.m., however, M. Sazonov became a convert to their view, and sometime about 8 p.m. the Tsar reluctantly consented to the general mobilization.

Presently arrived a telegram from the German Emperor framed in more conciliatory terms than Count Pourtalés' blunt declaration. The Tsar replied in the same tone, and being now in a state of painful indecision, telephoned to Sukhomlinov bidding him countermand the general mobilization. But that had been proceeding swiftly for many hours and could not be stopped. Sukhomlinov, thoroughly frightened, informed his master that his orders were technically impossible to carry out, and begged

him to consult the Chief of the General Staff. Januschkevitch, on being applied to, gave the same answer, but was told that the Imperial decision was final. The two confederates were in despair, for not only had their disobedience brought them to a hopeless *impasse*, but from the point of view of policy the Tsar's command was absurd. The German Emperor's telegram in no way altered the situation. His grievance was against "any military measure which can be construed as a menace to Austria-Hungary," and this applied equally to a partial mobilization. Sukhomlinov and Januschkevitch resolved to ignore the Imperial order and to let the general mobilization continue; but there was little rest that night for their uneasy heads. While these conversations were proceeding, Count Pourtalés was reflecting on his recent interview with the Foreign Minister, and beginning to wonder whether he had not gone too far. In the small hours he called on M. Sazonov and asked if there were any conditions on which Russia would suspend her mobilization, promising to dispatch them at once to Berlin. He was told that if Austria removed from her ultimatum the points which violated the sovereign rights of Serbia, Russia would stop all military preparations. This was telegraphed to the Wilhelmstrasse, but neither the indecision of Nicholas nor the second thoughts of Count Pourtalés had any longer much meaning, for that night in the German capital an irrevocable conclusion had been reached.

Sometime between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. on the 29th the Emperor met his military and political chiefs at Potsdam. The partial Russian mobilization was known to the conference, and on that they resolved on war against Russia, and, as a corollary, against France. But before publishing the declaration they decided to make a "strong bid" \* for British neutrality. The Imperial Chancellor motored back to Berlin and sent for the British Ambassador. Sir Edward Goschen's dispatch gives the gist of the strange conversation which followed:—

"He said that it was clear, so far as he was able to judge the main principles that governed British policy, that Great Britain would never stand by and allow France to be crushed in any conflict there might be. That, however, was not the object at which Germany aimed. Provided that the neutrality of Great Britain were certain, every assurance would be given to the British Government that the Imperial Government aimed at no territorial acquisitions at the expense of France should they prove victorious in any war that might ensue.

\* The phrase is Sir Edward Goschen's.

I questioned his Excellency about the French colonies, and he said that he was unable to give a similar undertaking in that respect. As regards Holland, however, his Excellency said that, so long as Germany's adversaries respected the integrity and neutrality of the Netherlands, Germany was ready to give His Majesty's Government an assurance that she would do likewise. It depended upon the action of France what operations Germany might be forced to enter upon in Belgium, but, *when the war was over*, Belgian integrity would be respected if she had not sided against Germany."

With this amazing proposal the troubled day of Wednesday the 29th closed. Britain had been offered complicity by Germany on insulting terms—that she should suffer France to be stripped of her colonies without protest, and that the neutrality of Belgium, guaranteed by Germany and Britain, should be respected only when the war was over. Sir Edward Grey was moved to honourable wrath, and early on the morning of the 30th replied in words which could not be misconstrued. He rejected utterly the Imperial Chancellor's suggestion that Britain should bind herself to a disgraceful neutrality. He appealed once more to Germany to work with him to preserve the peace of Europe, and he concluded with the expression of a hope which at the moment seemed to the world a vague academic idea, but which the rigour of war was to make a living reality.

" I will say this : If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, my one endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her Allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the late Balkan crisis, and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible some more definite rapprochement between the Powers than has been possible hitherto."

It was one of the ironies of that week that these wise words should have been addressed to Germany when she had already girt herself for illimitable conquest.

Two hours after the break-up of the Imperial Council at Potsdam the Emperor sent a telegram to the Tsar, which placed on the latter the entire weight of decision. If Russia mobilized against



Austria, mediation was impossible. Presently came the information from Berlin that Germany refused to forward to Vienna the formula agreed on with Count Pourtalés at his final interview. There was other news—of military preparations in Germany, of the movement of Austrian corps to Galicia, and of the continued bombardment of Belgrade. M. Sazonov went to Tsarskoe Selo, and convinced the Tsar that there was no alternative to general mobilization, so that the anticipatory acts of Sukhomlinov and Januschkevitch could at last be regularized. Meantime Germany did not act at once on the decision of the Potsdam Council. She was waiting for Britain's reply. Nervousness prevailed among her military chiefs, lest at the last moment the cup should be dashed from their lips ; they breathed more freely when the Berlin *Lokalanzeiger* published at noon what purported to be a decree mobilizing the whole German army and fleet. It was presently contradicted officially and the copies of the journal seized, but the announcement had done its work. Telegraphed to Petrograd, it overcame the last remnants of indecision in the mind of the Tsar, who thereupon signed the decree for the general mobilization. That was at four o'clock in the afternoon. Germany had no need for hurry. She had already taken steps which elsewhere would have covered all the preliminary work of mobilization. It needed only the touching of a button to set her great machine in motion. But in order to delude the world she was anxious that this final pressure should be subsequent to the official mobilization of her opponents, that on them the responsibility might appear to lie.

That day, on which all hope of peace between Germany and Russia disappeared, saw a certain wavering on the part of Austria. For the statesmen of Vienna seem suddenly to have realized that Russia was prepared to fight. Count Berchtold instructed the Austrian Ambassador in Petrograd to open conversations again with M. Sazonov, and used certain remarkable phrases. Austria, he said, did not desire to "infringe the sovereignty of Serbia," but to win guarantees for her own future security. She had mobilized only against Serbia, and had not moved a single man of the 1st, 10th, and 11th Corps, which were next to Russia. If Russia ordered a general mobilization, Austria must follow suit, but he especially laid it down that "this measure did not imply any attitude of hostility towards Russia, but was exclusively a necessary counter-measure against the Russian mobilization." This was a very different attitude from anything hitherto revealed. Count Berchtold for the first time spoke of respecting the sove-

reign right of Serbia, which was the point in dispute, though he still stuck to the unfortunate ultimatum. More important still, he showed that, unlike Germany, he did not regard mobilization, even a general mobilization, as shutting the door on peace. That day, too, a telegram was sent to Tschirschky by Bethmann-Hollweg, advising Austria to continue to negotiate with Petrograd. The message was so wholly out of tune with the other German deeds and declarations of this stage that it is difficult to believe that its purpose was other than propagandist. It was drafted with the hope of deceiving Britain as to the real responsibility, and to this end was published in an English paper on August 1st.

Sir Edward Grey, though the skies were swiftly darkening, had not yet lost hope. He still clung to his own proposal, that Austria should occupy Belgrade as a guarantee, and then allow Europe to mediate between herself, Russia, and Serbia. He had spoken in this strain to Lichnowsky on the 29th, but he received from Berlin only vague replies. His suggestion was accepted by M. Sazonov—a great concession, for it meant that Russia was prepared to negotiate while Austrian troops were on Serbian soil. Obviously there might be a violent difference of opinion between Austria and the Entente as to what constituted a violation of Serbia's sovereign rights, but there was one element of real hope in the situation: the mobilizations and counter-mobilizations had produced an *impasse*—but Count Berchtold had announced that he did not regard mobilization as necessarily implying war. To Sir Edward Grey's anxious eyes there seemed even at this eleventh hour a chance of peace. Germany thought likewise, and promptly took steps to shatter it.

Before we leave the 30th, we must notice two other events of that day. Prince Henry of Prussia sent a telegram to King George in which he urged that the only hope of peace was that Britain should induce Russia and France to remain neutral. He referred to a verbal message given him when in England by the King, which the German Emperor in his telegram to President Wilson a few days later alleged to have contained an assurance that Britain would be neutral even though Germany, Austria, France, and Russia went to war. It need hardly be said that no such message was ever given. On receiving Prince Henry's telegram King George replied, urging the Emperor to accept Sir Edward Grey's formula. It was the beginning of a telegraphic correspondence between the two monarchs, which was no more

than an expression of hopes and goodwill, and was without influence on the course of events. The second incident was of supreme importance. That day M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador, called on Sir Edward Grey, and reminded him of two letters written in November 1912, in which he had pledged himself, if the peace of Europe should be threatened, to discuss the attitude of Britain's policy in regard to the position of France. M. Cambon asked in effect for an assurance that, if war came, Britain would cast in her lot with France and Russia. Sir Edward Grey agreed to lay the matter before the Cabinet on the following day.

We come now to the morning of Friday the 31st. The British Cabinet met and decided that they could not yet guarantee the intervention of Britain. M. Cambon was informed that the Government intended to take steps forthwith to obtain from Germany and France an undertaking to respect Belgian neutrality, and must wait for the situation to develop. Sir Edward Grey—reasonably, on the information before him—still clung to the hope which the more pacific attitude of Austria had given him. He was also uncertain about his countrymen. As he wrote to the British Ambassador at Paris: "Nobody here feels that in this dispute, so far as it has yet gone, British treaties or obligations are involved. Feeling is quite different from what it was during the Morocco question. That crisis involved a dispute directly involving France, whereas in this case France is being drawn into a dispute which is not hers." This was undoubtedly at the moment a correct reading of British opinion; its long insensitiveness to foreign politics had unfitted it to read the signs now written large on the skies. High Conservative finance and the extreme Radical press were at one in their determination to avoid war. Again, if the Foreign Secretary was uncertain about his countrymen, he was not less uncertain about his colleagues. Six men in the Cabinet saw where events were tending unless a miracle intervened. These were the Prime Minister, Lord Haldane, Sir Edward Grey, Lord Crewe, Mr. McKenna, and Mr. Churchill. The others were ignorant, puzzled, and angry, and the left wing was making ready, in the event of the six voting for war, to lead a campaign for non-intervention in which they believed they would have overwhelming popular support. The Government of late had not been well agreed, and an active faction welcomed the chance of cutting loose from the bondage of the "Whigs." In the circumstances Sir Edward Grey could scarcely have done otherwise than he did. His enforced caution had no effect on German policy. Had he pub-

lished that day the news of a military alliance between Britain and France, Germany would not have swerved one hair's-breadth from her plan.

About midday on the 31st the news reached Berlin that Russia had ordered a general mobilization. It was the cue for which she had been waiting. It is clear from the Imperial Chancellor's conversation that morning with Sir Edward Goschen that Germany had resolved to act immediately on the decision of the Imperial Council of the 29th, now that Britain had been sounded, and, as he hoped, placed in the wrong. But the news at noon exactly served his purpose. The Emperor decreed a *Kriegsgefahrzustand*, a "state of danger of war," which meant the introduction of martial law, and the perfecting of the military machine, so that it only needed Moltke's famous "Mobil-krieg" to set it in motion. In every other country it would have been understood as in the fullest sense a general mobilization. An ultimatum was at once sent to Petrograd, and at midnight on the 31st Count Pourtalés notified M. Sazonov that if within twelve hours—that is, by midday on Saturday, August 1st—Russia did not demobilize against Austria as well as Germany, his Government would be compelled to order German mobilization. At the same time something in the nature of an ultimatum was sent to France. She was asked whether she intended to remain neutral in a Russo-German war, and a reply was demanded within eighteen hours—that is, by one o'clock next day. Baron von Schoen saw M. Viviani at seven that evening, and the brusqueness of the request lost nothing from the Ambassador's manner. It was clearly necessary for Germany to hurry on the breach with France, for all her military dispositions contemplated that the first blow should be struck in the West, and it would be fatal to be implicated in a Russian campaign with France still undecided. She knew very well what answer France would give to her truculent interrogatory. Within a few hours Germany had cleared the air, she had made war with France and Russia inevitable, and had put an end to the temporizing of her Austrian ally. That the latter danger was real is shown by the fact that sometime that day Count Berchtold instructed the Austrian Ambassador in Petrograd "to deal with Russia on the broadest base possible," and to open a discussion on the terms of the note to Serbia. It is hard to believe that this change of tone was merely part of the game of hypocrisy; for, with Germany declaring war, these concessions could only weaken the justification for such a war in the eyes of the world. But now and hence-



forward the doings of Austria have no significance ; the conduct of affairs had been taken into stronger hands.

That day the King of England received two messages. One was from the Emperor William, in which it was made clear that Germany regarded herself as committed to war with Russia. The other was from the President of the French Republic, in which, while admitting that Britain was under no formal obligation, he appealed to her to declare herself on the side of France as the one hope of preserving peace. " From all the information which reaches me it would seem that war would be inevitable if Germany were convinced that the British Government would not intervene in a conflict in which France might be engaged ; if, on the other hand, Germany were convinced that the *Entente cordiale* would be affirmed, in case of need, even to the extent of taking the field side by side, there would be the greatest chance that peace would remain unbroken." We know now that that chance had already gone, but M. Poincaré's message is proof, if proof were needed, of the earnest desire of France to avert war. King George, after consulting his Ministers, replied on the following morning with the same answer which Sir Edward Grey had given to M. Paul Cambon. There was still a faint hope of peace, and till that had gone the pledge asked for could not be given. But before many hours had passed the hope had vanished even from the mind of the British Cabinet.

That week-end was such as no one then living had ever known. For so widespread a sense of foundations destroyed and a world turned topsy-turvy we must go back to the days of the French Revolution. In Britain the markets went to pieces, the Bank rate rose on the Saturday to 10 per cent., and the Stock Exchange was closed. An air of great and terrible things impending impressed the most casual spectator. Crowds hung about telegraph offices and railway stations ; men stood in the streets in little groups ; there was not much talking, but many spells of tense silence. The country was uneasy. It feared war ; it was beginning to realize the immensity of the crisis ; and another feeling was appearing, scarcely reckoned with by the Government—a fear of a dishonourable peace. In Berlin, where the news was no novelty to the inner circle, an interesting performance was being enacted. With adroit stage management the incidents of 1870 were repeated. In the middle of the week the populace had gone mad with war fever, in spite of the famine of coin and the rapid advance in food prices. Wherever the Emperor appeared he was greeted

with wild enthusiasm. On the Thursday feeling quieted down when it was believed that Russia had given in, but on the declaration of a "state of danger of war" the fever broke out again. The approaches to the Palace were crowded at all hours, thrilling religious services were held, singing and shouting mobs filled the streets, until the order came after noon on Saturday for the general mobilization. That solemnized Berlin; anxious women took the place of noisy maffickers; and the capital, calming her nerves, prepared for a great struggle. If Germany failed, it was on her gates that the conqueror would beat.

Saturday, August 1st, opened with a misunderstanding between Prince Lichnowsky and Sir Edward Grey. The German Ambassador understood a question directed to him as to whether Germany would remain neutral if France did the same, as meaning whether Germany would keep from attacking France. He consulted Berlin, and promptly received an answer in the affirmative. But Sir Edward Grey asked for German neutrality also towards Russia, and this was of course refused. During the day the time-limit of the two ultimatums expired. At noon war began between Germany and Russia. At 11 a.m. Baron von Schoen was instructed, if France promised neutrality, to ask for stringent guarantees—no less than the temporary cession of the great border fortresses of Toul and Verdun—a demand which would have been refused. But the need did not arise for this harsh condition. M. Viviani seems not to have left it in doubt what course his country would take, but the German Ambassador departed without asking for his passports. He knew that the German mobilization was due that afternoon, and that the inevitable French counter-mobilization would give his masters all the pretext they required. Besides, they wanted to get the benefit of their surprise invasion of Luxembourg and Belgium before formally declaring war on France. Just after midday Germany issued the order for general mobilization; at 3.40 that afternoon France followed suit. Her troops were instructed not to go nearer the German frontier than ten kilometres, and to avoid any semblance of provocation. In starting her war machine she was already forty-eight hours behind Germany.

We must now turn our attention to Belgium, which for the rest of the week-end took first place in the world's eyes. On the 19th of April 1839, a treaty was signed in London by Austria, France, Prussia, Britain, Russia, and Holland under which Belgium was recognized as an "independent and perpetually neutral state,"

and her neutrality guaranteed by the first five signatories. For long the main danger was looked for from France, and it was Bismarck's revelation of the proposal made by Napoleon III., that he should be allowed to annex Belgium on certain terms, which did much to turn British opinion against the French Emperor in 1870. In that year Britain asked both the combatants their intentions towards Belgium, and both pledged themselves not to allow their troops to cross the Belgian frontier, while Britain engaged to declare war at once on the offender. After 1870 the menace seemed to come from the new German Empire, but both France and Germany showed themselves eager to make certain that the Belgian defences were strong enough to prevent a surprise attack by either Power. The inviolability of Belgian territory was also of acute interest to Britain, and in 1906 the British military attaché at Brussels, Colonel Barnardiston, had an exchange of views with the chief of the Belgian General Staff as to the measures which Britain would take as guarantor should Belgian neutrality be infringed by Germany. Such a step was perfectly in order, and was indeed no more than Germany had taken in May 1875. In 1912, after the Agadir crisis, Lieutenant-Colonel Bridges had a similar conversation,\* and Sir Edward Grey, in order to clear up any misunderstanding, expressly disclaimed any intention on Britain's part to land troops in Belgium, unless the latter's integrity had already been violated. Germany, as late as the spring of 1913, apparently held to her treaty obligations, for on 29th April of that year her Minister of War declared in the Reichstag: "Belgium plays no part in the causes which justify the proposed reorganization of the German military system. . . . Germany will not lose sight of the fact that Belgium is guaranteed by international treaty." This undertaking was repeated in the same debate by Jagow.

Belgium had therefore been for some years in a condition of jealous watchfulness, determined to defend her integrity against all the guaranteeing Powers without discrimination—nervous especially about Germany's doings, but not without twinges of anxiety concerning France. Her position made her a close student of European affairs, and she viewed with profound disquiet Austria's

\* The record of these conversations, found in the archives at Brussels after the occupation of that city by Germany, was made much of by German publicists, though they proved nothing except Britain's loyalty to her guarantee of neutrality. In this Germany followed the example of Frederick the Great, who in 1756, after his unprovoked attack on Saxony, ransacked Dresden for some secret treaty which should show Saxony's hostility to Prussia.

ultimatum to Serbia. On the 29th of July she mobilized her army and put her forts in a state of defence. As soon as the German "state of danger of war" was ordered, Sir Edward Grey, remembering the Imperial Chancellor's words to Sir Edward Goschen on the night of the 29th, asked the French and German Governments for an assurance that they would respect the neutrality of Belgium so long as no other Power violated it. He received from France at once the fullest assurance, but from Germany an ambiguous and disquieting answer. Jagow said that he must consult the Emperor and the Imperial Chancellor before replying, and that he was doubtful if he could answer at all, "since any reply they might give could not but disclose a certain amount of their plan of campaign, in the event of war ensuing." He added that his Government considered that certain hostile acts had already been committed by Belgium. The stage was being set for a new version of the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb.

With this news on the Saturday Sir Edward Grey attended the meeting of the British Cabinet. The situation was changing. Belgium was clearly threatened, and Belgium directly touched British interests and British honour. The Cabinet resolved that Germany must be warned that here lay a clear cause of strife, unless the required pledge was given at once. Prince Lichnowsky, when he met the Foreign Secretary, asked whether, if Germany promised not to invade Belgium, Britain would agree to remain neutral. Sir Edward Grey declined to commit himself. "All I could say was that our attitude would be determined largely by public opinion here, and that the neutrality of Belgium would appeal very strongly to public opinion here. I did not think we could give a promise of neutrality on that condition alone." The Ambassador's question was futile, for he was not in the confidence of his superiors. The invasion of Belgium had already been arranged down to the last field gun.

On the morning of Sunday, 2nd August, came the first act of war. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, about the size of an English county, lies at the south-eastern corner of Belgium, between the Ardennes and the river Moselle. It is a country of low ridges and meadowland, the junction point of five railway lines with important connections. The little state, which had a population less than Edinburgh, had long been in a position of disarmed neutrality under the protection of its powerful neighbours. A volunteer force of 150 men, and the same number of gendarmes, constituted its sole defence, and the city of Luxembourg, once



reckoned the strongest fortress in Europe, had for half a century been dismantled. On the Sunday morning the advance guard of the German 8th Corps crossed the frontier by the bridges of Wasserbillig and Remich, and about 11 a.m. the inhabitants of the capital were surprised by the arrival of motor cars and an armoured train containing the officers and men of the 29th Regiment. These seized the Adolf Bridge, and demanded a right of passage through the duchy for the German army. A gendarme or two protested, and there was an end of it. Luxembourg was like the nest of field-mice in the path of the reaping machine, and could do nothing to stay the onset. By the afternoon German covering troops from Trèves were tramping along her eastern roads, and her railways were in German hands.

That hot August Sunday saw movements elsewhere on the frontier. German cavalry patrols of the 16th Corps crossed the Alsatian border as far as the village of Joncherey, and had a brush with French pickets. A body of German dragoons entered the village of Suarce and took prisoner nine French peasants. The same thing happened near the village of Reppe. Early next morning—before the declaration of war—there was a raid near Lunéville, and a fight at Réméréville with Uhlans from Château-Salins. Even under this provocation France behaved with scrupulous correctness, and kept her covering troops more than six miles from the frontier. The Germans published broadcast official tales of French violations of German territory, but each was later proved a fabrication. They are too childish to be worth recounting here: the most important were later denied by Germany herself; and it was remarkable that, while the falsehoods were being circulated, German statesmen were so badly coached that they did not all tell the same story.\* But the motive of this mendacious propaganda was clear. The German nation must be convinced that they were the aggrieved, not the aggressors; and the Emperor must have a free hand in his manoeuvres for position, for under the Imperial Constitution he could not declare war without the assent of the Bundesrat unless German territory were attacked.

At seven o'clock that evening came the celebrated ultimatum to Belgium.† The views of Germany on the binding nature of treaties had not been concealed from the world. "No people,"

\* See, for example, French *Yellow Book*, No. 155, and René Puaux's *Le Mensonge*.

† According to Herr Kautsky's evidence, this note was finally drafted by the German Staff as early as July 26th, and presented to the Imperial Chancellor for approval on the 29th.

so ran a famous saying of Bismarck's, "should sacrifice its existence on the altar of fidelity to treaty, but should only go so far as suited its own interests." And throughout Treitschke's writings the doctrine is repeatedly preached: "The statesman has no right to warm his hands at the smoking ruins of his fatherland with the pleased self-praise that he has never lied. That is merely a monkish virtue." And again: "All treaties are written with the clause understood: So long as things remain as they are at present." We may admit some reason in the *rebus sic stantibus* argument; it is easy to conceive a case where a treaty might be a purely antiquarian document, empty of reference to a living world, and adherence to it mere pedantry, because by universal consent it had been tacitly superseded. We may admit, too, that in certain circumstances there may be a moral duty of self-preservation in defiance of written law. But this situation was clear beyond casuistry. The guarantee of Belgian neutrality was as vital as on the day when it was given; it was the charter of Belgium's existence as a nation, and on it the other guaranteeing Powers based their conduct. Nor was the national existence of Germany in danger except from her own arrogance; as her every act bore witness, she was deliberately setting forth on a campaign of conquest. A man protecting his own home against violence may be pardoned if he goes beyond the letter of the law, but not so the violator.

The note presented to the Belgian Foreign Minister began by stating that Germany had received reliable news that the French intended to march on the line of the Meuse by Givet and Namur, and that Germany in self-defence must anticipate any such attack. This was a bold saying, considering that the whole of the French military scheme was based on an advance in the Alsace-Lorraine area, and that she had fatally neglected the Belgian border. The document went on to demand a passage through Belgium for German troops. If Belgium assented and maintained a benevolent neutrality, Germany undertook, at the conclusion of the war, to evacuate her territory and guarantee in full her independence. If she refused, Germany would be regretfully compelled to treat her as an enemy. The thunderbolt had fallen, and all that night the Belgian statesmen discussed the terms of their reply.

Meanwhile on that Sunday things were moving faster in Britain. The Naval Reserves were called out, and a moratorium was proclaimed for the payment of bills of exchange other than cheques. The Cabinet met in the morning, and with the growth of anxiety about

Belgium the pacifist group began to lose ground. The most notable conversion now in progress was that of Mr. Lloyd George. His past reputation had been won as an opponent of war, and it was not easy for him to appear suddenly in a new rôle. Of all the Ministers he was probably the one least instructed in the intricacies of foreign affairs, and in the true nature of the crisis. But the threatened outrage on a little people roused his anger, and his acute power of diagnosing the mind of his countrymen told him that in this matter popular feeling would soon be at fever-heat. Belgium was to make of him an emotional convert to war, and for three years, long after the larger ambitions of Germany had been made abundantly clear, he continued to assert that Britain entered the struggle because of Belgium and Belgium alone. There could be no better commentary on the mental confusion of the majority of British Ministers. That Sunday morning's Cabinet, however, made an appreciable advance. It authorized Sir Edward Grey to assure M. Paul Cambon that, if the German fleet came into the Channel or through the North Sea to attack the French coast, the British navy would give France all the protection in its power. This assurance was subject to the Government receiving the support of Parliament, and did not bind Britain to move till the specified hostile action had taken place. The main value of the pledge was that it enabled France to settle her naval dispositions in the Mediterranean, where her fleet had long been concentrated. She was indeed in a most perilous case. She had depleted her Atlantic and Channel defences in hope of Britain's alliance; now she was at war and Britain was not yet an ally; at any moment a German fleet might appear on her western coasts. She had taken the desperate resolution to send Admiral Rouyer with a single cruiser squadron to engage the enemy in the Straits of Dover. That day the Opposition took a step, highly creditable to themselves, which greatly strengthened Mr. Asquith's hands. The Unionist statesmen, collected hurriedly from distant country houses, sent to the Prime Minister a note offering their unqualified support in any measures he might take on behalf of the honour and security of Britain and her Allies. In the evening, after dinner, Sir Edward Grey and Lord Haldane, having received the news of the Belgian ultimatum, visited Mr. Asquith and explained to him their own decision, with which he concurred. It remained to be seen whether he could carry the Cabinet and Parliament with him; if not, his course was resignation. The Prime Minister, after his fashion, when convinced at long last of the reality of a crisis, did not suffer from

a divided mind. He empowered Lord Haldane to summon on his behalf the Army Council next morning, and issue orders for mobilization.

The battle of diplomacy was nearing its end, and Monday, 3rd August, saw throughout Europe a knitting of loose threads into the web of war. That day the Grand Duke Nicholas was appointed Generalissimo of the Russian forces, and the first blow was struck in the East—a skirmish of outposts near Libau. That day Germany declared war upon France. In Berlin itself the chief preoccupation of the Government seemed to be to secure that political unity which would be a strong shaft for the spearhead of the armies. The Social Democratic Party had just sent an envoy, one Hermann Müller, to confer with the French Socialists in Paris. The latter told him that if France were attacked they must either abstain or vote for the war credits; they could not vote against them. Müller replied that most German Social Democrats would prefer to vote against the credits, but if his French comrades abstained, his colleagues might do likewise. Presently, however, the whole situation changed. The Imperial Chancellor, who knew his men, received in private conference on 3rd August the leaders of the Reichstag groups, and that day the Social Democrats also met. The great majority of the latter, believing that Germany was being wantonly attacked, resolved to vote the war credits, and, apparently influenced by fear of what they called the “victory of Russian despotism,” next day the whole group, including even Haase and Bernstein and Karl Liebknecht, assented to the Chancellor’s proposals. The rulers of Germany had not misread the temperament of their people.

At 7 a.m. on the Monday morning, twelve hours after the ultimatum was presented, Belgium returned her answer. She intended at all costs to fulfil her international obligations, and would offer vigorous resistance to any invader. “The Belgian Government, if they were to accept the proposals submitted to them, would sacrifice the honour of the nation and betray their duty towards Europe. Conscious of the part which Belgium had played for more than eighty years in the civilization of the world, they refuse to believe that her independence can be procured only at the price of the violation of her neutrality. If this hope is disappointed, they are firmly resolved to repel by all the means in their power every attack upon their rights.” This bold defiance, delivered while Britain still seemed to hesitate, was like the sudden wind which sweeps a morning fog from the valleys. At the same



hour King Albert telegraphed to King George making a supreme appeal for the diplomatic intervention of Britain to safeguard the integrity of his country. He had still a faint hope that the invader might hesitate if it was made clear that the crossing of the Belgian frontier meant instant war with Britain.

That morning the British Cabinet met. It was a momentous occasion, for Ministers were already in possession of the German ultimatum to Belgium, and, while they sat, came King Albert's personal appeal to King George. Mr. Churchill informed his colleagues that he had taken timely steps, and that by that hour the whole sea power of Britain was in readiness for war. An hour before, Lord Haldane, acting for the Prime Minister at the War Office, had ordered the mobilization of the British army—an act of incalculable importance at a time when every hour was vital.\* The Government were at the parting of the ways. The temper of the people was rising, and the hope of the pacifist section to lead a whirlwind campaign for peace was dwindling. The desperate case of Belgium had had a profound effect upon Mr. Lloyd George, and without him there could be no real opposition. Lord Morley, the last of the strait Victorians, and Mr. John Burns took the honourable course and resigned. They were men of an older world; war was to them so repugnant that no compulsion of fact could persuade them to be party to it. Ten of the others made a feeble attempt at revolt, and that day endeavoured to form a faction which they besought Lord Morley to lead. But the events of the afternoon persuaded them that the House of Commons and the nation were against them, and they yielded, whether convinced or unconvinced, to the dictates of political discretion. It is not the least of the comedies of history that the most fateful decision ever taken by a British Cabinet was arrived at in the case of most of its members for mistaken or even for discreditable reasons. Sir Edward Grey prepared a telegram † to Sir Edward Goschen demanding from Germany an immediate assurance that Belgian neutrality would be respected, and he informed the Belgian Minister in London that a violation of Belgium would for Britain mean war.

The views of the House of Commons had still to be ascertained.

\* The results may be judged from the dates of concentration in France. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Infantry Divisions, and the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions were concentrated on various dates between the 9th and 22nd of August; the 4th Division on the 23rd.

† The telegram was not sent off till early on the 4th, after the House of Commons debate.

The day was a Bank Holiday, and during the afternoon at every post-office in the country crowds were waiting for the first news of Sir Edward Grey's speech. When it came the sigh of relief which went up from men who had most to lose by war showed how deep had been the national anxiety. The Foreign Secretary's statement that afternoon was such as only he could have made. It was the expression, in plain words without rhetoric or passion, of a most honest and peace-loving mind, which had left no channel of mediation unexplored, which had striven against every rebuff to avert calamity, and which now sadly but inevitably was forced towards war. He narrated the events of the past week and defined the part which, in his view, Britain must play. She was bound to Belgium by the most sacred treaty obligations. She was not bound to France by any actual defensive or offensive alliance, though her Government had anticipated that joint action might some day be necessary, and had arranged for certain consultations between the two General Staffs. But she had given France the promise that, if the German fleet undertook hostile operations against the French coast or French shipping, the British fleet would protect her. He announced that that fleet was already mobilized, and that the Cabinet had decided to mobilize all the land forces of the Crown. The House of Commons received this declaration of policy with almost unanimous approval.

Next day, Tuesday the 4th, saw the end of those thirteen days, when statesmanship laboured to buttress the tottering barriers. That morning Sir Edward Grey advised Belgium to resist by force any German invasion, and promised to join with Russia and France in supporting her. In the early hours the invasion had begun. The Germans crossed the frontier at Gemmenich, and during the day Visé was burned and the first shots were fired on the forts of Liége. At the same time the German Minister in Brussels announced that since Belgium refused to grant her a free passage, Germany would take one by force—the equivalent of a declaration of war.

The last act was played in Berlin. Sir Edward Goschen received Sir Edward Grey's message early on the 4th, and at once called upon Jagow. He was told that a passage through Belgium was a matter of life or death to Germany, and that she could not draw back. Then came a second telegram from London instructing the British Ambassador to serve an ultimatum on Germany, and unless a satisfactory reply was given before midnight,

to ask for his passports. When the message arrived the Imperial Chancellor was delivering his historic speech in the Reichstag, in which he repeated the familiar misstatements about France's violation of German territory. His most famous passage was that in which he defended the breach of the neutrality of Luxembourg and Belgium :—

“ We are in a state of necessity, and necessity knows no law. We were compelled to override the just protests of the Luxembourg and Belgian Governments. That is a breach of international law. . . . The wrong—I speak frankly—that we are committing we will try to make good as soon as our military goal is reached. He who is threatened as we are threatened and is fighting for his all can have but the one thought—how he is to hack his way through.”

Of Britain he said little ; even at that late hour he seems to have doubted her entering the arena. But when he returned from the Reichstag, he was asked to see Sir Edward Goschen, who had already, about 7 p.m., presented Jagow with the British ultimatum.

That final interview with Bethmann-Hollweg sheds so clear a light upon the mind of Germany that Sir Edward Goschen's narrative deserves quotation.

“ I found the Chancellor very agitated. His Excellency at once began a harangue which lasted for about twenty minutes. He said that the step taken by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree : just for a word—' neutrality,' a word which in war time had so often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her. All his efforts in that direction had been rendered useless by this last terrible step, and the policy to which, as I knew, he had devoted himself since his accession to office had tumbled down like a house of cards. What we had done was unthinkable ; it was like striking a man from behind while he was fighting for his life against two assailants. He held Great Britain responsible for all the terrible events that might happen. I protested strongly against that statement, and said that, in the same way as he and Herr von Jagow wished me to understand that for strategical reasons it was a matter of life and death to Germany to advance through Belgium and violate the latter's neutrality, so I would wish him to understand that it was, so to speak, a matter of ' life and death ' for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to do her utmost to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked. That solemn compact simply had to be kept, or what confidence could any one have in engagements given by Great Britain in the future ?

The Chancellor said, ' But at what price will that compact have been kept? Has the British Government thought of that?' I hinted to his Excellency as plainly as I could that fear of consequences could hardly be regarded as an excuse for breaking solemn engagements; but his Excellency was so excited, so evidently overcome by the news of our action, and so little disposed to hear reason, that I refrained from adding fuel to the flame by further argument. As I was leaving he said that the blow of Great Britain joining Germany's enemies was all the greater that almost up to the last moment he and his Government had been working with us and supporting our efforts to maintain peace between Austria and Russia. I said that this was part of the tragedy which saw the two nations fall apart just at the moment when the relations between them had been more friendly and cordial than they had been for years. Unfortunately, notwithstanding our efforts to maintain peace between Russia and Austria, the war had spread and had brought us face to face with a situation which, if we held to our engagements, we could not possibly avoid, and which, unfortunately, entailed our separation from our late fellow-workers. He would readily understand that no one regretted this more than I.\*

The news had leaked out. The Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs called on the British Ambassador about 9.30, and asked if the request for passports meant a declaration of war. It was then two and a half hours to midnight, and he was reminded that at midnight Sir Edward Grey must have his answer. But no formal answer was ever given. The newsboys in the street were already shouting war with Britain, and presently the crashing of glass in the Embassy windows told that the Berlin mob had awakened to the fact that the strife was not to be confined to the continent of Europe, but was to rage through the wide world. The disappointment of Germany was deep—deep as had been her blindness. For a moment her zest was a little dashed, for the entrance of Britain brought into that methodical future which she had planned a touch of the incalculable. "The British change the whole situation," the Emperor told Mr. Gerard a few days later. "An obstinate nation! They will keep up the war. It cannot end soon."

So closed the feverish fortnight when the dams of war cracked and broke and let loose the torrent. The historian, surveying the facts with all due detachment, can reach but the one conclusion. Austria, not without some show of reason, had ever since

\* It is fair to note that Bethmann-Hollweg's own account of this interview varies in some important points, and in particular puts a slightly different complexion on the "scrap of paper" remark. Both men were deeply moved, and liable to interpret words and gestures in the light of their own emotion.



the Balkan War decided that the growth of the new Slav power beyond the Danube threatened the existence of the Dual Monarchy in its traditional form, and had resolved to seize the first occasion to dissipate the menace. The tragedy of Serajevo gave her the chance she sought. But her governing motive was a perverted notion of self-defence, for, as a state, she had no large dreams of conquest, and when she saw that the fire she was lighting in south-eastern Europe was like to become a world-wide conflagration, she hesitated at the last moment and would have drawn back. Such is the only possible interpretation of Count Berchtold's action on 30th and 31st July. The view of the meaning of a general mobilization which he then stated cut the ground from the whole of Germany's cause of quarrel with Russia. But Berlin stepped in and slammed the door on peace. For more than a year the rulers of Germany had made up their minds for war—war, if possible, in instalments, but war which in the last resort would give them a world hegemony. She seized, like Austria, on the pretext of Serajevo, but with a far wider purpose. From first to last she was privy to every step taken by Vienna, for she initiated and directed them. She could count for support upon the megalomania of her governing classes, but it was necessary to convince her soberer citizens that she was entering upon a war of defence, so for a fortnight she laboured to put her future opponents in the wrong. But in all her subtle diplomacy she blundered, for, save among her own people, she stood self-condemned before the storm broke. Instead of severing her rivals she united them, and made her plan of war by instalments impossible. The entrance of Britain was against her immediate calculations, but not outside her ultimate scheme. It is unnecessary to assume that the whole of Germany was agreed upon such a colossal bid for fortune as that to which she was committed by 4th August. All her statesmen were at one on the war with Russia and France, but many would have fain postponed the reckoning with Britain to a more convenient day. But she had willed the end, and had perforce to embrace the means. The guilt of war in the major degree rests upon every class of her people, not only on the actual war-makers but upon the millions of her citizens who docilely accepted from their rulers the coarsest fictions.

Against the conduct of the Entente during those weeks no charge of substance can be made. Russia strove zealously for peace, for the aberrations of Sukhomlinov and Januschkevitch were in defiance of the Tsar, and in any case did not affect the main

issue. France laboured till the last moment to prevent catastrophe, and by her scruples gave her enemy an initial advantage. When all hope had gone she faced the crisis with a noble calm, very different from the excited hours of 1870. Nor can there be any serious reflection on the action of Britain. Sir Edward Grey played under supreme difficulties a part which must rank among the most honourable achievements of British statesmen, and for Mr. Asquith and the Ministers who supported him from the first there can be nothing but praise. Yet it must be recorded that it was only by accident that the right course was taken. The tone of the press at the time, and the discussions in the Cabinet up to 3rd August, showed how ignorant and unprepared were our people. The true political issue was not understood save by a few, and had the issue remained only political it is to be feared that Britain would have long hesitated, and might have fatally compromised the fortunes of the Entente by her delay. But the outrage on Belgium raised a *moral* issue which swept away every doubt. It is not too much to say that the honour and liberty of our race were saved by the martyrdom of their little neighbour.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE STRENGTH OF THE COMBATANTS.

The German Military System—Austria-Hungary—France—Russia—Britain—The British and German Navies—Economic Strength of the Belligerents—The Strategic Position—The Rally of the British Empire.

BEFORE we enter on the chronicle of the campaigns, it is desirable to review the position of the different combatants—their relative preparedness for war, and the strength which they could muster in the field, for on such circumstances depended their strategical plans. Such a review must necessarily be of the most general type. If we take as our standpoint the strength patent to the world on the outbreak of hostilities, we shall reach some understanding of how the odds looked to contemporaries, but we shall neglect many sources of strength and weakness which were only revealed during the campaign. If, again, we make our review in the light of full knowledge, we shall present a picture which no contemporary would have accepted as accurate even for his own land, and shall get a false impression of how the problem appeared to each Government, since a nation's policy is based not on objective truth but on what it takes to be the truth. It will be sufficient if at this stage we set down on broad lines and in round figures the apparent assets of each belligerent, leaving it to later chapters to add to or subtract from such an inventory.

#### I.

The two weapons potent above others for the coming struggle were the German army and the British navy. The German army system may be said to date from the reconstruction of the Prussian force which followed the battle of Jena. Under Bismarck, von Moltke, and von Roon it was extended to the other German states; it was barely completed when the war of 1870 began; since that date it had been amplified and perfected into an exact machine, but the main features were still those of Gneisenau and

Scharnhorst. Its guiding principle was that of the "nation in arms," an idea which was in turn the product of the wars of Napoleon. Every male citizen of reasonable physique was liable to service; the State took what men it desired, passed them through its hands in a period of short service, and from them, and from those less fully trained, established under various grades of efficiency an enormous reserve, which could be called up in that combat *à outrance* which had never been absent from the contemplation of German statesmen. A German was liable to serve from the age of seventeen, and if he was called up his service began at twenty. He served for two years with the colours if in the infantry, and for three if in the cavalry and horse artillery. A high standard of physique and discipline prevailed, and those years were years of incessant toil. Then he entered the Regular Reserve, where he remained for five or four years, according to his arm. These seven years completed, he went into the first levy of the Landwehr for five years more, and then entered the second levy, where he remained till he had completed his thirtieth year. This gave him a total of nineteen years of varied service from the day he first joined. After that he joined the first levy of the Landsturm, in which he continued till he was forty-five. This Landsturm had a second levy, which consisted of men between the ages of thirty-nine and forty-five who had escaped the ordinary training. Over and above the number thus provided, out of the many who for various reasons escaped the call to the colours the Ersatz Reserve was formed, whose members duly passed into the Landsturm. There were thus various classes of reserves, apart from the Ersatz, who were called up in order of their value. First came the Regular Reserve—the men who had served with the colours and were aged from twenty-three to twenty-seven. Next came the Landwehr, Class I., consisting of those who had served seven years with the colours and with the Regular Reserve, and whose ages were from twenty-seven to thirty-two. After that ranked the Landwehr, Class II., made up of the same men between thirty-two and thirty-nine. Then we reach the Landsturm, Class I., which consisted of men who had passed through the Landwehr, and were from thirty-nine to forty-five years old. The Landsturm, Class II., the last emergency resort, were untrained men of all ages. We may call the three reserves the Regular, the Special, and the National, provided we realize that these names are not to be construed in their English sense.

The German army in the final form given it by the law of



1912 was organized in twenty-five army corps, which, except the Guard Corps, were recruited on a territorial basis. Each corps was usually composed on a war establishment of a Staff; two infantry divisions, each of two brigades, while each brigade was made up of two regiments with three battalions each; two regiments of field artillery, comprising seventy-two pieces; a battalion of riflemen (Jäger); a contingent of cavalry, varying from three squadrons to a complete division in the case of the Guard; and a number of corps troops. On mobilization each corps formed a third or reserve division from the Regular Reserve. The cavalry was organized in regiments, each with one depot and four service squadrons, and was grouped in brigades of two regiments, and in divisions of three brigades. All this was a matter of common knowledge throughout the world. But there were *arcana imperii* not revealed. It was known, for example, that provision had been made for forming reserve corps out of surplus reservists, but it was not known—it was not even guessed—that before 1914 arrangements had been completed for duplicating every first line corps with a reserve corps during the mobilization period. Such reserve corps were not like those of the French—half empty cadres made up of poor material—but units ready at once to take the field. Other unrevealed matters were the capacity for a rapid and lavish provision of machine guns\* throughout the line, a considered scheme for their tactical use, and the developments made in the departments of motor traction and heavy artillery.

It was difficult to form an exact estimate of the fighting strength of such a force. The population of the German Empire in 1914 was some 65 millions, the number of males some 32 millions. The law of 1912 provided for a peace strength which should rapidly advance to something in excess of 700,000. This would permit of a mobilization in first line and reserve corps of at least four million trained men. But such a figure was only the starting point. In a war of life and death, the whole male population between 15 and 60 would beyond doubt be drawn upon, and the nature of German education and society made a drastic levy easier than in other lands. Her man-power would give her in any one year some 15 millions of men of every variety of fighting value, and, making all deductions for the unfit and for losses, she could maintain under arms at least 6 millions, of whom 5 millions would be in the battle line. Each year her increment from the new classes would be 500,000.

\* The nominal provision was the same as the French—2 per 1,000 men.

Her man-power for war was therefore the greatest in the world, with the exception of Russia. But of still higher value was the quality of her organization. For at least half a century the best brains in the country had been directed to the military art. The army was the chief arbiter of social fashion, and a middle-class family would pinch and hoard to have one son an officer. For the nobility it was almost the sole profession; and it was a real profession—arduous, exacting, but offering splendid rewards. Promotion was slow, for a senior subaltern might have twenty years' service behind him, and a senior captain thirty, but the interest and prestige of the life would seem to have been sufficient recompense. For the army in Germany was a popular thing, in which the people felt an intimate pride. A man who did well was assured of a career, and a man who did competently could look forward to a civil service post which would provide for his old age.

Of the whole machine the Staff was the key, and the two hundred officers on the General Staff in 1914 were the cream of the army, and scarcely to be matched in the world. The German is a good teacher and an apt pupil, and in this sphere there were the highest inducements to teach and learn. Entrance to the General Staff was slow and difficult, and misfits were ruthlessly discarded. The selected staff officer was a man sound in body and temperament, thoroughly trained in the practical work of soldiering, and possessing of necessity considerable mental power. The two very different spheres of administration and operations were strictly delimited, and the work in both was brought to the highest pitch of theoretical perfection. The antiquated ideas of the old Prussian system had been discarded, subordinates were encouraged to show initiative, and mistakes were rated lightly compared with the vice of supineness. In the unassuming building in the Alsen Platz, hard by the Brandenburg Gate, the Great General Staff, created by Scharnhorst and perfected by the elder Moltke and von Schlieffen, had for years been making plans in full detail to meet every conceivable crisis. Served by a highly organized intelligence system, minutely informed as to the views and capacity of their neighbours and the terrain of every possible field of operations, they had made certain that, at the word of the Emperor, a machine would be set in motion which for power and smoothness had no parallel in history.

As this narrative proceeds we shall have occasion to consider the principles which governed Germany's war; here it is enough to note the suppleness and strength of the weapon. But a word

may be said of the spirit in which the weapon was forged. The German Staff had calculated to the last decimal the calculable part of the problem which they knew they must face. They fore-saw a war on two fronts, and realized that the advantage given them by their supreme preparedness was terminable, and that to win they must win quickly. Hence they concentrated their efforts on the maximum weight of attack in the shortest time, on an accumulation of strength in the vital area which should be far superior to any which their enemies could show. They had the immediate preponderance in numbers, and owing to the perfection of their railways they had the means of using them. In this they reasoned soundly ; and they were not less correct in their recognition of the truth that the coming campaign would be fought under novel conditions and must at the outset be largely a matter of guess-work. To the best of their ability they had assessed the possibilities of modern scientific discoveries in their relation to war, and in certain matters of armament had reached true conclusions. But they were not willing to dogmatize ; they were content to feel their way. Clausewitz's wise words were always in their mind : " He who intends to move in such an element as war must bring with him nothing at all gained from books save the education of his mind ; if he brings with him ready-made ideas which have not been inspired in him by the shock of the moment, which he has not generated out of his own flesh and blood, the rush of events will overthrow his building before it is completed." In such a mood of cool science they entered upon their task. But it is not given to human nature to shake itself wholly free from dogma. If in theory the German military chiefs professed a wise opportunism, in fact they had their biases of race and temperament, sometimes avowed, more often unconscious, which, rather than the revealed truths of the case, were to decide their practice. And while their theory was right, these more potent biases, as we shall see, were not infrequently wrong.

The armed forces of Austria-Hungary were organized mainly on the German system, with certain exceptions due to the nature of the Dual Monarchy. There was an Imperial army—the oldest standing army in Europe ; two Landwehrs, one for Austria and one for Hungary ; and a general Landsturm, or levy-in-mass. There were sixteen army corps, on a territorial basis, each corps containing two infantry divisions of two brigades each, one cavalry brigade, one artillery brigade, and various corps troops. In war a

Landwehr division was added to each of the regular corps. On a peace footing the strength of the army was a little over 400,000 officers and men, and on a war basis it reached a figure in the neighbourhood of 2,000,000, exclusive of the Landsturm. In a defensive war *à outrance* the country could count on putting some 6,000,000 men, trained and untrained, into the field.

The Austrian army was not a military machine which approached the calibre of the German. Austria had had no Bismarck or Moltke, not even a Gneisenau, in her recent history. Since the Archduke Charles she had had no commander of the first rank, and her campaigns from Austerlitz onward had been mainly records of defeat. Solferino and Sadowa were not encouragements to recruiting like Gravelotte and Sedan. The result was that, while her military caste was dominant and assured and many of her constituent peoples of excellent fighting quality, there was no strong popular enthusiasm for her army and no great intelligence in its direction. Austria was also faced with a special difficulty. Under her rule were many races who had affinities beyond her borders. To send her Polish troops against Russian Poland, or her Croats and Serbs against the armies of the Southern Slavs was to run the risk of mutiny and defection. In a war such as the present she was, therefore, bound to distribute her army corps not on purely military, but on political grounds. Her Tyrolese must go north of the Carpathians; her Galicians to the Italian frontier. It was obvious that such a necessity must grievously complicate her whole problem of mobilization at the outset, and of transport and reinforcements in the later stages. Yet she had elements in her ranks of high fighting quality, notably the divisions from Tyrol and Hungary, and in certain branches of military science, such as siege artillery, she had no equal. Her strength as an ally to Germany was that she greatly added to the man-power of the Teutonic League; her weakness lay in the long extension of the battle line that her security demanded, and in the lack of homogeneity in her levies. The strength, it was clear from the outset, could be fully used and the weakness provided against only by a very complete subordination of her leaders to the German High Command.

The French army, as is usual with a nation whose last great campaign has ended in failure, had been the object of many experiments in the past forty years. The law which governed it in its present form was only one year old, which meant that the



service was not yet properly standardized, and many of those with the colours were the products of superseded statutes, just as in Britain the terms of enlistment laid down in 1902 only ceased to work in 1914. The law of 1913, like its predecessor of 1905, was framed to reduce the disparity of France as against the rapidly increasing man-power of Germany, for she had a population of under forty millions, as against the German sixty-five. Unlike Germany, she called practically her whole able-bodied male population to arms. A Frenchman found fit for service normally joined the colours at the age of twenty, spent three years in the Regular Army, eleven in the Regular Reserve, seven in the Territorial Army, and seven in the Territorial Reserve, and did not leave the strength till he had attained the age of forty-eight.

As a colonial Power she had been compelled since the 'eighties to keep a colonial army, recruited by volunteers, as an expeditionary force for her overseas empire. Like Russia, she had therefore come to possess several armies, each with its own special character. First came the first line of the Home Army. There were twenty-one army corps, organized more or less on a territorial basis—twenty located in France and one in Algeria. An army corps had two divisions, a division two brigades, a brigade two regiments, a regiment three battalions each of 1000 men. In addition, there were in each corps a cavalry regiment and a special force of corps artillery, not allocated to the divisions, and numbering twelve batteries. To eight corps there was allotted also a battalion of chasseurs. There were ten cavalry divisions, each division comprising six regiments, divided into two or three brigades. There were also a number of special "regional" troops, which provided an extra division for certain corps. As part of the *Armée Métropolitaine*, we must note the four regiments of Zouaves—white troops nominally belonging to the Algerian force, but largely stationed in France; and the six regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique, the cavalry whose famous charge all but redeemed the calamity of Sedan. The native African troops, recruited in Algeria by balloting and elsewhere by volunteers, were the twenty battalions of Tirailleurs Algériens or Turcos, the heroes of Solferino; the four cavalry regiments of Spahis; and a division of Tirailleurs Sénégalais, drawn from the Niger basin, troops of much the same type as the British Sudanese. The reserves for the first-line army were arranged in eleven classes, and were computed to number some 2,000 men for each battalion. The Territorial Army, destined for lines of communication and garrison duty, but also available for field

service in home defence, was organized to produce 36 divisions on mobilization. These divisions were, however, only cadres, and the purpose of the Territorials was to form local guards, the surplus being sent to depots for training as drafts to supply losses. Affiliated with the normal Territorials and destined for the same purpose of garrison work were the Gendarmerie, the Garde Républicaine, the Douaniers and the Gardes Forestiers. Lastly we come to the Armée Coloniale, partly white troops recruited anywhere in French territory, partly native troops raised in Africa. This force was a true *corps d'élite*, and in the fullest meaning of the word a first-line army. In 1914 it numbered 87,000, white and native troops. Of similar quality, but regarded as a special force under the authority of the Admiralty, was the Infanterie de Marine, which was relegated for service with the home army.

These various forces provided a peace strength of some 700,000 men, and on mobilization the first line would be doubled by the inclusion of men from the reserve—a field strength of some 1,400,000. The remaining reservists would be organized in reserve units similar to the regulars, and all duties behind the lines would be taken over by the Territorials. Roughly speaking, the system gave France a month or so after the beginning of war about 4,000,000 trained and partially trained men, of whom we may allot 700,000 to the first line, 700,000 to that portion of the Regular Reserve required to put the first line on a war footing, 700,000 to the balance of the Regular Reserve, 700,000 to the embodied Territorial Army, 700,000 to the Territorial depot reserve, and 700,000 to the Territorial surplus. This provided a first-line army of about 1,500,000, a second line of about 500,000 partially trained, and a reserve of some 2,000,000.

The fighting machine which France could set in motion on the outburst of war ranked easily second among the forces of the world. In numbers it was inferior to the German, but the inferiority was not glaring; France's real danger lay in her limited power of subsequent expansion. Each year her increment from the new classes would be only 200,000, as against Germany's 500,000. Out of a possible six or seven millions of able-bodied males she had already enrolled two-thirds, whereas Germany had not used a half, scarcely indeed a third, of her resources. Her only additional reservoir lay in her African possessions, but Colonel Mangin's proposal of a vast native army\* had not been acted upon. In a war of endurance France might find herself declining

\* See his *La Force Noire*.

in numbers at a perilous rate, while her antagonist was still far from his maximum. There were other defects which weighed heavily on the mind of the French leaders. The reserve divisions could not take the field quickly in full strength. The Quarter-master-General's side was in grave disorder, and the stores of essential equipment had been suffered to sink dangerously low. The fortresses had fallen into a great decay, though on the French theory of war they were to play the part of breakwaters and hold the tide of invasion till the army was ready. In the matter of weapons the merits of the 75 mm. field gun, the best of its kind in the world, had induced a false confidence. The machine gun equipment was inferior to that of Germany; there were far fewer of them, the type was less good, and their tactical use was still in the rudimentary stage. Heavy artillery, too, had been neglected. The French heavy batteries were utterly insufficient in number and weak in power; the 4.2 howitzer threw a shell of only 40 lb., as against the German 5.9 with its 87 lb. shell and three shots a minute. France's strength lay in the quality of her men rather than in their numbers or equipment. She had a magnificent first line, but too little behind it.

Yet, when all discount has been made, that quality was in itself a most formidable thing. Her North African possessions gave her a magnificent training-ground, and many of her troops had had actual experience of war. If Germany's inspiration was Moltke and 1870, France's was the Napoleonic Wars; and in many points, like the heavy loads carried by the infantry and the belief in rapid and cumulative attacks, her views were those of the Grande Armée. The French Infantry retained all their historic dash and *élan*, and were probably the best marchers in Europe. The French General Staff,\* too, had not been behind Germany in that "fundamental brain work" which was rightly regarded as the basis of success. Some of the best military literature of modern times had been produced by French officers, and France had of late years shown a remarkable aptitude for military inventions. In one respect she differed greatly from her neighbour. She had no military caste to draw upon for her officers. The highest posts in her service were open to any one who could pass the requisite examinations and show the requisite talent. A democracy has its drawbacks in war, and a republic cannot give, perhaps,

\* Foch, when Commandant of the École de Guerre, had endeavoured unsuccessfully to increase the two years Staff course to the three years of the German system. Yet, in spite of a shorter course, by a skilful arrangement of studies the French Staff training was unquestionably the most perfect of all the belligerents.

that freedom from political interference and that continuity of policy which are desirable for a military machine. But the lack of this mechanical perfection had its compensations. If the discipline appeared less rigorous, there was a far greater *camaraderie* between men and officers, as any one who has marched with a French regiment will bear witness. In a defensive war for national existence this spirit of fraternity might be more potent in battle than any barrack-yard precision.

Russia, like France, was a great Power which had suffered disaster in her last campaign, and was therefore eager to redeem her credit. A reform movement of a kind had been at work in her army for the past eight years, and Kuropatkin had interpreted the lessons of the Japanese War in unequivocal terms to his countrymen.\* But how far progress had gone was hard to estimate alike for enemy and ally, for she did not publish her domestic concerns to the world. Unhappily many reforms remained only on paper, and much of the new credits granted was not honestly applied. Like her neighbours she had the system of universal compulsory service, but with her vast population of more than 170 millions she could afford to allow large exemptions. The age-limit of service was forty-three, and the term with the colours was three years in the infantry and four in the other arms. Her force was organized in army corps, whose recruiting areas extended from the banks of the Vistula to the shores of the Pacific, and from the Arctic circle to the steppes of Turkestan. It was divided into three Regular armies—the European army of 27 army corps and 20 cavalry divisions, of which we may put the peace strength at some figure like 1,200,000; the Army of the Caucasus of three corps and four cavalry divisions; and the Siberian Army of five corps. The total strength may be taken at 1,700,000—approximately double the peace strength of Germany. The duplication of the first line by new reserve units and the bringing up of all units to their full total would give a war strength on mobilization of at least four millions. But this was only the beginning. The surplus of drilled reservists after the reserve units were formed could not be less than two millions; the various bans of the Militia would add another million; and since less than half of her available contingent was called up yearly, there was a balance of many millions for further recruiting.†

\* See his *Russian Army and the Japanese War* (Eng. trans. 1904).

† General Gourko (*Russia in 1914-1917*) estimates that 14,000,000 were called to the colours up to December 1916.



The man-power of Russia seemed, indeed, inexhaustible, but her fighting capacity was limited by the difficulties of the transport problem over so vast an area, and the doubt as to whether war material could be accumulated in sufficient quantities to do justice to her numbers. Unlike Western Europe, her railways were few and irregularly distributed. Her field guns were good, but she had little heavy artillery, and, being a country with few industries, she had not the machinery for a rapid expansion of munitions. Her officer class had undoubtedly improved since the Japanese War, but it was far too small for the huge forces to be mobilized. She suffered, too, as we shall see later, from the lack of a considered strategic policy. Indeed it might fairly be said that of all the reforms canvassed since 1905 only one had taken effect, the increase in mobilizable numbers. Her army was a formidable weapon, but rather from size than from quality. In a war of defence she might justly be regarded as invincible; in offensive warfare, where time was of the essence of the problem, her defects were obvious. One asset she possessed of high value. The docility and endurance of the Russian rank and file had always been famous, and under competent leading they had few superiors. For Russia much depended upon the cause in which she fought. Her infinite masses, far removed from ordinary news channels, were slow to kindle; but if the cause were truly popular, the Slav nature might reveal that stubborn ardour against which a century before the genius of Napoleon had striven in vain. Yet even in this fine quality there lurked a danger. The Russian people were not, so far as ordinary education went, on the same level as their Western allies, and the very patience and docility which made them formidable in battle might by a turn of fortune's wheel ruin their military value. For it is a characteristic of the primitive virtues that their application is incalculable.

In the British army we reach a force different in history, constitution, and purpose from that of every other European country. The aim of Britain for the last century had been to possess a small, highly professional, and perfectly equipped army for service anywhere on the globe, and a second line purely for home defence. She desired a real army without surplusage, exactly suited to the needs of her Empire and of home defence, but no more. Of the many efforts to attain this ideal I need not write at length; every war which we had waged had taught us a lesson, not infrequently exaggerated in its application. We may content

ourselves with a brief survey of the system instituted by Lord Haldane between 1907 and 1910, during his tenancy of the office of Secretary of State for War.

The conclusion of the South African campaign in 1902 left our military system in great confusion. We had detected many flaws and given ourselves up to empiric remedies. There was no General Staff. The attempt of Lord Roberts and Lord Middleton to organize the army in six corps produced only phantoms. The War Office showed a succession of fleeting military chiefs who had neither the talent nor the authority to adjust the machine. In 1905 the military forces of the Crown were a heterogeneous collection of fragments incapable of speedy and effective use. The Regular Army had no unit larger than a brigade which could have gone to war without changing its composition. The only large unit, the so-called Aldershot Army Corps, could not have taken the field without a long delay. The cavalry was short of horses. Mr. Arnold-Forster had armed the artillery with the new 18-pounder, but no adequate provision had been made for ammunition, and not more than forty-two batteries could have been put in the field. The infantry was short of men, and the system of linked battalions had virtually broken down. In the second line was the Militia, which was bled in peace for the Regular Army, and which in any case was not liable to serve abroad. The third line, the Volunteers and Yeomanry, competed for recruits with the Militia, and had no real higher organization. All three lines were uncorrelated. Most serious of all, there was no provision for expanding the first line in case of need.

Lord Haldane, when he took office, saw that the main problem for the British army was not home defence, but the power of taking an offensive overseas wherever required, and that the problem was the same whether the expeditionary force was destined for some part of the Empire or for the continent of Europe. His first step was to summon to his aid the younger soldiers who had made a reputation in South Africa. In his reconstruction he followed three great principles. The first was that a true General Staff must be created, and that its work of planning strategy and supervising training should be completely separated from the wholly different province of administration.\* The second was that all organization must be on a war and not on a peace basis, the units

\* He did not succeed in getting the departments of the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, and the Master General of the Ordnance—the Administrative or *Intendantur* side—into one great department, but he freed the Imperial General Staff from irrelevant duties.

being ready to spring into full activity immediately on receiving their reserves, instead of having to enter a new formation. The third was that a larger fighting unit was needed than the brigade, and that this should be not the old small British division, but the great continental division of three brigades, complete with divisional cavalry, artillery, and transport. He refused the alternative of a two million army on the continental pattern, for Britain did not need it. The old three lines were replaced by two—the Regulars, with the Militia turned into a special reserve, and the Territorial Force, with an organization akin to the first line. His aim was to provide a striking force of professional soldiers ready to serve anywhere at any moment, and behind it a volunteer citizen army, capable of rapid expansion and intensive training in time of war. He had, therefore, an Expeditionary Force of six divisions capable of mobilizing and concentrating on the Continent within twelve days, and at its back a Territorial army of fourteen infantry divisions and fourteen mounted brigades, which, with the assistance of the 20,000 partially trained young men of the Officers' Training Corps, might expand under stress into a nation in arms.\*

\* In 1914 the results stood as follows.—To take the Regular Army first: The Expeditionary Force was organized as a force of six infantry divisions and nearly two of cavalry. The Regular infantry were divided between the stations at home and abroad, with the exception of the Guards, who in peace time were not employed on foreign service, and whose term was three years with the colours and nine in the Reserve. The Army Reserve consisted of those who had completed their service with the colours, and had not yet completed the term for which they had enlisted. The Special Reserve acted in peace time mainly as a feeder for the Regulars, many joining it as a preliminary to the Line; the period of enlistment was for six years, and all ranks were liable for foreign service in war. In the Territorial Force, the term of service was four years, re-engagements being allowed, and the training was considerably higher than in most of the classes of the continental Territorial forces. The Territorial Reserve, which was part of Lord Haldane's scheme, had made little progress, and consisted mainly of officers who had left their regiments but wished to rejoin on mobilization. Lastly came the National Reserve, made up of old soldiers, many beyond the age limit, who were registered in part for general service, in part for home service alone, and in part merely for purposes of training and administration. It will be seen that the British army presented features analogous to all the classes of continental military systems. The army corps, the superior unit of continental systems, did not appear in the British army in its peace organization. The administrative unit was the Command, based on localities, and including both Regular Army, Special Reserve, and Territorial forces. The highest field unit in peace was the division, which consisted of three infantry brigades, three field artillery brigades, one field howitzer brigade, one heavy battery, two field companies of Royal Engineers, one squadron of cavalry, and various divisional troops, making a total of 18,073 men, 5,592 horses, 76 guns, and 24 machine guns. A brigade of infantry consisted of four battalions; a battalion of four companies of about 240 men each, subdivided into platoons of 60. The battalion was commanded by a lieutenant-colonel, the brigade by a brigadier-general, and the division by a major-general. The artillery unit was the "brigade," which in this connection

Lord Haldane's reconstruction did not meet with universal approval. The General Staff would have preferred conscription and a large first line on the continental model. The difficulties in the way of this policy were, first, that such an army could not have been created except during a long period of assured peace, and that in peace the British nation would not have consented to a machine so far beyond what it considered to be its normal needs; second, that such a development would have involved a hiatus between old and new, and that to admit this hiatus would have been to court Germany's attack. Lord Roberts, with all the weight of his great character and long experience, advocated a scheme of universal compulsory training for home defence. On the merits of his proposal it is not necessary at this date to argue; undoubtedly, had it been in operation in 1914, it would have greatly facilitated the creation of the new armies. The practical obstacle in its way was the difficulty of providing officers; but it is important to remember that it would not have given Britain a larger expeditionary force to meet the urgent crisis. It was not in this sense an alternative to Lord Haldane's system, but a development of one side of it; the only alternative was the General Staff's proposal for a conscript continental army, which the peculiar circumstances of Britain made impracticable, even if it had been desirable. Minor criticisms directed against the reduction in the infantry and artillery may be neglected; there was in fact no reduction; weak units disappeared, but the total mobilizable strength was increased. As we look back after the long testing years we may well admit that the structure which Lord Haldane built, upon foundations laid by Mr. Balfour, was not only the best which the circumstances permitted, but a thing in itself nobly conceived, wisely wrought, and abundantly justified by results. By virtue of his proven achievement he stands with few rivals in the roll of the War Ministers of Britain.

On the outbreak of war the Expeditionary Force for immediate use numbered 160,000 troops of all arms. The total regular strength with the British colours reached in round figures 250,000; the Army Reserve numbered 145,000, the Special Reserve 81,000; had a different meaning from the word as used in continental armies. In the Field Artillery a brigade comprised three six-gun batteries; in the Horse Artillery two batteries. The cavalry regiment was made up of three squadrons, each some 150 sabres, subdivided into four troops. A cavalry brigade had three regiments; a cavalry division had four brigades, and four batteries of horse artillery; but there were also cavalry brigades which were not allotted to any division. In war the full strength of a cavalry division was 9,269 men, 9,813 horses, 24 guns, and 24 machine guns.



the Territorial Force had a peace establishment of 316,500, but it was short of this by some 50,000 ; and the National Reserve had reached the creditable level of 200,000. But these figures were no index to the potential fighting strength of Britain. She had never been called upon to exert herself in recruiting, and the first shock of war sent myriads of young men flocking to the colours. She had deliberately chosen to limit herself to a small highly trained striking force, trusting to the protection of her Navy to allow her to improvise an adequate army in the case of a great war. The choice, as it now seems to us, was wise. She followed Raleigh's precept : " There is a certain proportion both by sea and land beyond which the excess brings nothing but disorder and amazement." She was consciously reserving her strength for a long sustenance of effort ; as Germany played for immediate victory, so Britain thought of the ultimate battle. Her resources, provided the issue were not decided in the early months, would steadily grow, for unlike her neighbours she had but skimmed the cream of her man-power for the first trial, and had not depleted her economic wealth by extravagant armaments. In three years, were she given the time, it was fair to assume that, with her colonies and dependencies, she could send five million men to the theatres of war.

But that was for the future. Britain's military strength in the first round of the struggle could be measured only by her Expeditionary Force. Small as this striking force was by comparison with that of her neighbours, it was not to be compared with any continental army of the same size. In the words of a German critic, it was " a perfect thing apart." The British regulars were beyond question the most professional in the world. Their training, both in duration and thoroughness, went far beyond anything known in the short-service German army. The fact that she had commonly to fight her wars in desert and ill-provided countries had compelled her to bring her transport and commissariat arrangements to the highest pitch of perfection. The same was true of the engineering and medical services. Again, a large proportion of both men and officers had had actual experience of war. Most officers over thirty had gone through the trying South African campaign ; the senior commanders had Indian and Egyptian wars as well in their recollection. Such field experience is no small ingredient in the *moral* of an army. A man who has already led or followed successfully under fire has learned something that no text-book or staff college or manœuvres can teach. In Carnot's

famous words, "It is not pirouetting up and down a barrack-yard, but active service that makes an old soldier." The British staff-officer, though he had not behind him the long traditions of the French or the German, was adequate to the forces with which he was associated. And in one matter the younger British officer surpassed his foreign colleagues. His mind worked freshly and originally on the discovery of new weapons. The nature of the coming war was not fully envisaged by any soldier, but many of its details were correctly anticipated in Britain. In the course of this narrative we shall find examples of British skill in the invention of new weapons; here it is sufficient to note that, years before the war, officers at such schools as Hythe had pressed for the use of rifle-grenades, bombs, trench periscopes, Véry pistols, and other instruments presently to become only too familiar, and had almost invariably been rebuffed by an unimaginative Treasury.\*

To state the opposing strengths in the field at the outset of war in mere numbers gives little enlightenment, for numbers were not the only, or indeed the chief, factor. It is better to put the odds in general terms than with any mathematical preciseness. The total man-power of France, Russia, and Britain, with their allies of Belgium and Serbia, was a little short of double that of Germany and Austria, but the disparity was enormously less—probably not more than 13 to 8—with regard to the immediately mobilizable armies. In the vital theatre of war—the Western front—Germany could at once place forces preponderating by at least 50 per cent over those of France and Britain. In that theatre, indeed, the immediate odds in Germany's favour were even greater, owing to the perfection of her long-planned scheme of attack. If she could succeed at once in the West, the Eastern theatre, where the elements were less clear, would offer no difficulty, since she could then give it an undivided attention. But if victory did not come at once and the war lengthened out, a new situation would arise involving naval and economic factors. To these we must now give brief consideration.

## II.

In reviewing the naval power of the belligerents we may for the moment neglect all save Britain and Germany. The other

\* It is significant that Bernhardt in his post-bellum *Vom Kriege der Zukunft* advocates as a result of war experience many principles which were either adopted in the British army of 1914, or were then strongly urged by leading British soldiers.

navies played their part, but it was local, and immaterial to the main problem; the duel for the supremacy of the sea must be fought out by the two antagonists who faced each other across the northern waters. The British navy at the outbreak of war had reached a point of efficiency both in quality and quantity which was unprecedented in its history. It is true that the growth of German sea-power had relatively reduced its pre-eminence, but the existence of a bold claimant for the empire of the ocean had stimulated the spirit of the fleet, and improved its organization for war. This is not the place to enter into the interminable discussions which since 1906 had raged around the subject. The attempts at reduction, happily frustrated, may well be relegated to oblivion. Ever since Lord Selborne's period of office at the Admiralty a steady advance may be noted in training and equipment. The establishment of the Royal Fleet Reserve and the Volunteer Naval Reserve, the provision of North Sea bases, the admirable work done by the Committee of Imperial Defence, the development of armament and of battleship designing, the improvement in gunnery practice, the system of manning older ships with nucleus crews, the revision of the rates of pay, the opening up of careers for the lower deck, and the provision of a naval air service, were landmarks in the advance. Much was due to Lord Fisher, who for five and a half years held the post of First Sea Lord; something was due, also, to the civilian First Lords, Mr. McKenna and Mr. Winston Churchill. The former saved the situation in the crisis of 1909; the latter flung himself into the work of his department with a zeal and intelligence which were of incalculable value to the country in the hour of need. In the Navy Estimates of March, 1914, Parliament sanctioned over fifty-one millions for naval defence—the largest sum ever granted for the purpose. There was always a certain criticism of our naval policy on technical grounds, for the advent of the big gun, the submarine, and the airship had dissolved much of the old orthodox theory, and the air was thick with new doctrine. In particular, the organization of the Admiralty was attacked with some justice, and the first months of war revealed various errors of prevision. The capital ship had tended to monopolize our mind to the exclusion of other weapons. But it is unquestionable that Britain had never been stronger afloat than when at 8.30 on the morning of 4th August her Grand Fleet put to sea.

The German navy, the second in the world, was a creation of the past fifteen years, deliberately undertaken for the purpose

of challenging British supremacy. The chief begetter had been an obscure naval officer called Tirpitz, who in 1897 succeeded Admiral von Hollmann as Minister of Marine. With the support of the Emperor he began to wring money for the navy out of a reluctant Treasury and in the face of a jealous army, and by dint of a skilful press campaign succeeded in arousing in the German people a new enthusiasm for maritime power. At the outbreak of war he had held office for fifteen years, and had built up a navy which in ships and men was second only to one—a marvellous performance for so short a period. In the old days the German navy had been regarded as a branch of the army: naval strategy was conceived of as only an auxiliary to land strategy, and ships as units for coast defence. It had been the task of the new German sea-lords to emancipate the fleet from this military tradition. The result was that the navy had become a far more democratic profession than the sister service, and had drawn to it many able men of middle-class birth who were repelled by the junkerdom of the army. It was manned chiefly by conscripts, but about a quarter consisted of volunteers, mainly dwellers on the coast and on the Frisian and Baltic islands, and men who had deliberately made it their career. The officers were almost to a man professional enthusiasts, and British sailors, who fraternized with them in foreign ports, had borne witness to their efficiency and seamanlike spirit.

In August 1914 Britain possessed 73 battleships and battle-cruisers, 34 armoured cruisers, 87 cruisers, 227 destroyers, and 75 submarines—many of each class being of an antiquated type. Germany had 46 battleships and battle-cruisers, 40 armoured cruisers, 12 cruisers, 152 destroyers, and 40 submarines. But as she had practically all her fleet in northern waters, the true comparison was between her High Sea Fleet and its actual antagonist, the British Grand Fleet. On this basis Britain had 20 Dreadnoughts, 8 pre-Dreadnoughts, 4 battle-cruisers, 9 cruisers, 12 light cruisers, and 42 destroyers; Germany, 13 Dreadnoughts, 16 pre-Dreadnoughts, 3 battle-cruisers, 2 cruisers, 15 light cruisers, and 88 destroyers. Germany had 28 submarines, and was building 24; Britain had 54 and was building 19; but of the 54, 37 were old types useful only for coast defence, and only 9 of the total were comparable to the German craft. Germany's strength in destroyers and submarines is to be noted, for it gave a hint of her naval policy. She could not hope to meet the British Grand Fleet in an open battle—at any rate not at the beginning. It



was her aim to avoid such a trial of strength until the British lead had been reduced by the slow attrition of submarines, mines, and the casualties of the sea. The policy of a sudden raid—that "day" which German naval officers had long toasted—was made almost impossible by the manner in which war broke out and by the preparedness of Britain at sea.

The Fabian line of strategy had many advantages from Germany's standpoint. It gave ample scope for the ingenuity and boldness of those branches of her sea-service, like mine-layers and submarines, to which she had paid special attention. It kept her fleet intact against the time when, her arms victorious on land, she could sally forth to fight a dispirited enemy. Further, a period of forced inaction must have a wearing effect upon the nerves of the British navy. For a fleet which believes itself invincible and longs for combat it is a hard trial to wait day after day without descrying an enemy's pennon on the horizon. The modern battleship had not the constant small duties which existed in the ships of Nelson's time, and it was hoped that the men and officers might grow stale and apathetic; or, in the alternative, they might risk an attack upon the German fleet in its home waters—an attack which, in the German view, would result in the crushing defeat of the invader.

This plan, perfectly sound strategy in the circumstances, was made possible by the peculiar configuration of the German coast, and the magnificent shelter it provided. The few hundred miles between Emden and the Danish frontier are deeply cut by bays and river mouths, and the western part is screened by the chain of Frisian islands from Borkum to Wangeroog. In the centre of the bight lies Heligoland, a strong fortress with a wireless station. Close to the Dutch frontier is the estuary of the Ems, with the town of Emden. Then follows a low, sandy stretch of coast, indented with tidal creeks, till the estuary of the Jade is reached at Wilhelmshaven, which was the fortified base of the North Sea Fleet. Next is the estuary of the Weser, with the important dockyard of Bremerhaven. Last comes the estuary of the Elbe, with Cuxhaven at its mouth, opposite the debouchment of the Kiel Canal, and at its head the great city and dockyard of Hamburg. Each estuary was a network of mazy channels among the sands, requiring skilful piloting, and in themselves a strong defence against a raid. There was, further, the screen of the islands, behind which operations could take place unnoticed, and there was the Kiel Canal to furnish a back door to the Baltic. The coast was followed by a double

line of railway from Hamburg to Emden, which tapped no populous district and carried no traffic, but was meant solely for strategic purposes. This Frisian corner was the key to German naval defence. Her front there was protected from British assault, and from that base her submarines and destroyers could make raids on the British navy and return swiftly to sanctuary. Britain was handicapped in this kind of contest by her weight. It was like the fight of an elephant against a leopard. The heavier antagonist, once he can use his strength, makes short work of the enemy; but he may be given no chance to exert that strength and may, weaken and sink from a multitude of trivial wounds. Britain had the further drawback that at the outset she possessed no naval bases on the North Sea fortified against submarine attack.

The German plan involved the immediate sacrifice of Germany's foreign trade, which would be speedily put an end to by that considerable part of the British navy which was not on duty with the Grand Fleet. On the other hand it maintained her main naval strength intact; it immobilized in the difficult duty of siege and blockade the bulk of the sea-power of Britain, and kept that sea-power in a state of exasperated inaction and perpetual risk. These, however, were advantages and disadvantages which could only materialize in the event of the prolongation of the war. In the early stage, Germany's effort after immediate victory, the two navies had no bearing upon the struggle save in one point—the ferrying over the Channel of the British Expeditionary Force. If Germany could prevent or delay that operation her fleet would have secured a brilliant and most vital success in the first round.

To the later rather than to the early stages belonged, too, the question of the economic resources of the belligerents; but in this place a short survey may be permitted, for if such considerations were principally relevant to a protracted war, they had also some effect in determining the initial preparation. The capacity of a nation to endure the economic strain of a long campaign, to feed itself, to manufacture munitions, to keep its people in reasonable employment, to avoid the panics which force the hand of statesmen, is an integral part of military strength. Many economic factors may be neglected. War reduces life to its bare bones and curiously simplifies the problem. Three questions only need be asked: could the land keep itself from starvation? could it manufacture or procure the necessaries of war? could it raise, within or without its borders, the funds required to pay for the campaign?

Britain imported the larger part of her food supply—some 80 per cent. of her wheat, 40 per cent. of her meat, vast quantities of other cereals and dairy produce, and the whole of her sugar. Of these supplies only a small proportion came from enemy countries, and most of the great staples were brought from lands where production was not crippled by the war. Provided, therefore, that the sea could be kept clear by her navy, Britain's food supply would not be seriously affected; on the other hand, the closing of the seas would mean starvation within three months. France was able to feed herself. She grew 40 million quarters of wheat to the British  $7\frac{1}{2}$ , and though she imported certain food-stuffs to a considerable amount, she exported others. Her danger under this head came from the decline in her own productive capacity caused by the march of the invader and the withdrawal of husbandmen for military service. As against this the overseas routes were open to her, assuming that the British navy were not beaten, and her customary surplus of home-grown food was now available for home consumption. Russia could without difficulty feed herself, even if she put ten million men into the field. Austria-Hungary also had a balance of home-grown supplies beyond her needs. Germany's position approached more nearly that of Britain. In normal times she imported large stocks of food-stuffs, and the balance against her would naturally be increased in time of war by the withdrawal of rural workers. Her former main supply grounds, Russia and America, would now be cut off, and Austria-Hungary and Rumania could not fill the gap. A lengthy war would beyond question pinch her, but it would be years before that pinch became famine. For her deficit of home-grown food was not, like Britain's, overwhelming; she could, if necessary, stimulate home production, and by this means, and by the ingenious manipulation of alternative foods, she could continue to exist long after the outer world was closed to her. She might presently be under-fed, but it would be hard to bring her to actual starvation.

How far could the belligerent lands manufacture or procure the essential munitions of war, for it was obvious that if the campaign lengthened out the bulk of the industries in each country would be diverted to that purpose? Here Britain was in by far the most fortunate position. Her huge industrial machine was not at the start weakened by any wholesale withdrawal of men for the line of battle. She had ample coal, and while she held the sea she had the whole world to draw on for raw materials.

France, too, had this last advantage, but in coal and iron ore she was weak, and her industries were not on the British scale. Russia was a poorly industrialized land, and must depend for a large part of her munitions of war on her Western allies. Germany was in a curious position. She had become predominantly a manufacturing people, importing great quantities of raw material and minerals, and in 1913 exporting no less than £495,000,000 worth of manufactured goods. Within her own bounds she had certain kinds of wealth in great abundance—various chemicals, coal, and iron ores. Indeed it had been the iron-fields of Lorraine, annexed in 1871, which had made possible her industrial and military development. The discovery in 1878 of the basic process of smelting the ore was like the discovery of the silver mines of Laureion by Athens after Marathon; the one gave a navy for Salamis, the other provided an army for the conquest of Europe. But in some matters like copper and rubber she had no hope of home supplies, and the closing down of her import trade would gravely handicap her munition production. This she had foreseen, and endeavoured to avert by accumulating large stocks in advance and devising alternatives. We may therefore say that Germany was all but a self-sufficing state for the purposes of war—all but, not wholly—and the “little less” would be a considerable handicap as time went on. Her opponents were very far from being self-sufficing, but they held the sea and with it the markets of the outer world.

The last question concerns the funds available for the conduct of war. In the long run this resolves itself into the ability of each nation to raise money from its own citizens or its allies, for loans from neutral countries are at best a precarious staff to lean on. Too much stress is apt to be laid on the actual gold reserve existing at the outbreak of hostilities. It is no doubt important, but its absence may be compensated for by the general stability of credit in a particular country and the existence of private wealth to be reached by taxation. Britain had no war chest, but she had a strong and elastic banking system, a wealthier population than any other, and her losses from the operations of war were likely to be at the start far less than those of the other combatants. There remained, in spite of recent taxation which critics had condemned as being on a war basis, a vast reserve of untouched wealth in British hands, and in a struggle for endurance she was more favourably situated than any continental state. In France the taxation had long been high, and the nation's debt



was heavy. Her assets were the huge gold reserve—some 145 millions—in the Bank of France, the considerable store of gold in private hands, and, above all, the thrifty habits of her population. Russia had a large war chest, and a big reserve of gold in the State bank, while her recent prosperity had accumulated resources among her people. In such a crisis the less complex organism suffers least, and to Russia the strain of war would to begin with not be serious. Austria-Hungary had to face a grave shrinking of her joint revenue, which was mainly derived from customs; and this, which was the source of her military expenditure, would have to be supplemented by grants from the direct taxation of her component states. Here the pinch would soon be felt, but for a considerable period it would be a pinch and not a catastrophe. Germany had a big gold balance in her banks, and the war chest in the Spandau Tower. Owing to the peculiarities of her political system it was difficult to compare her financial position with that of other nations; but her various public debts were large, and there was no question but that, between imperial and state taxation, her people were heavily burdened. As the industrial sources of wealth would soon be dried up, she had to depend for her income upon accumulations. Her position would have been more serious were it not that her bureaucratic system of government enabled her to manipulate the available resources with a speed and a smoothness impossible in a democratic community. For the first stage of war this question of finance is, indeed, the least important. No nation has ever yet been restrained from fighting because of a depleted exchequer. A self-sufficing state which does not need imports or is unable to import can always provide funds by voluntary and forced levies from its citizens. The more serious difficulty is for the importing states, which have to pay for imports in some form of currency which the exporters will accept. But this is a problem which is not urgent at the outset for nations which have any reserve of gold or of foreign investments.

### III.

We have seen that, except in one respect, naval strength did not enter into the problem of the first stage, and economic considerations were irrelevant. Germany had set the lists for and decreed the form of the first round, which was a struggle of armies on the French frontier. In our present limited inquiry two matters still

remain for consideration—the strategical position, and the *moral* of the various combatants. The natural situation of Britain was unique. Without a land frontier in Europe she was practically invulnerable to land attack from a European Power throughout her whole empire, except from Russia, who was her ally. The key of her security was the ocean, and invasion was possible only when some Power temporarily had command of the narrow seas. But this position, admirable for defence, had its drawbacks in offensive warfare. If she desired to fight on the Continent, not only must she hold the seas for the transport of her armies, but she must be in alliance with a continental Power who would facilitate their disembarkation and land transport.

France had a land frontier with Germany, extending from a point just south of Belfort, at the north-west corner of Switzerland, northwards to Longwy on the Belgian border—a distance of some 150 miles. This frontier showed very varied physical characteristics. Between Switzerland and the southern butt of the Vosges Mountains is a piece of flat land known as the Gap of Belfort, the passage through which is dominated by the fortress of that name. Northwards for seventy miles the line follows the crest of the Vosges till the mountains sink into the plain of Lorraine. Inside this French frontier on the west are the upper valleys of two rivers—the Meuse on the north, and the Moselle farther south. In all parts this line was strongly defended. From Belfort north to Epinal ran a line of forts, while the difficult Vosges country was a further protection. Between Epinal and Toul lay the Trouée de Charmes, a gap in the fortress system which the Germans regarded as a trap left open on purpose. Between Toul and Verdun, two first-class fortresses, lay the fortified area of the upper Meuse. Opposite Verdun, and commanded by it, is a gateway into France from the German fortress of Metz. This gap is some thirty miles wide, and at its northern end begins the rough, hilly land of the Ardennes, which extends through Belgium to the valley of the lower Meuse. France was thus protected on her side towards Germany by a combination of natural and artificial barriers which would make invasion a slow and difficult process. Her weak point was the contiguity of Belgium and Luxembourg. The latter was a neutral state wholly without fortifications, and giving access to any enemy, who cared to disregard its neutrality, to the southern Ardennes and the central Meuse valley. Belgium showed on the north-east a narrow front of entry between the Dutch frontier and the northern flank of the Ardennes—a front which was defended by the Meuse,

which here turns northward, and by the forts of Liége. In Namur and Antwerp she possessed other first-class fortresses ; but obviously the resistance of so small a state against invasion could not be indefinitely prolonged. Once the invader won through Belgium, the French line of defence would become the line from Maubeuge by Lille to the coast, a line vastly inferior both in natural and artificial strength to the Verdun-Belfort line in the east. On the south France had no strategic difficulties. Switzerland and Spain would be neutral, and, though Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance, it was unlikely that she would draw the sword against her old ally in the Risorgimento. France's sea-power had considerable strategic importance, though far less than in the case of Britain. Some of the best of her troops were in Algiers, and to bring them back necessitated the command of the Western Mediterranean. With the assistance of the British fleet this was a practical certainty.

Russia, so far as conquest was concerned, had long been regarded as invulnerable. No invasion, not even under a Charles XII. or a Napoleon, could hope, it was thought, to prevail against her vast distances and the rigours of her winter climate. For a war of offence she had certain strategic difficulties, chiefly concerned with the topography of her western frontier. On the east she had nothing to fear from Japan, and could recall her troops of occupation from Manchuria. She was free to concentrate her whole might against the Teutonic alliance, but that concentration was not an easy matter. Russian Poland ran in a salient westwards to a point only some 180 miles from Berlin. North was East Prussia, commanding the right flank of any Russian advance, and south was the Austrian province of Galicia, commanding the left. While the main Russian concentration was likely to be on the fortress line running through Warsaw, it was necessary, before an advance could be made westwards, to clear the enemy out of East Prussia and Galicia. The first was a land of marshes and swampy ponds, difficult campaigning at all times, and one vast morass, as Napoleon found, in the rains. When that country was traversed, the line of the Vistula had to be crossed, defended by the strong fortresses of Thorn, Graudenz, and Danzig. Galicia, on the south, contained only two first-class fortresses, Przemysl and Cracow, and the Austrian armies operating there, being drawn mainly from the non-Slav parts of the Dual Monarchy, would be at some distance from their southern bases. Once the flanks were clear, the way would be open for a Russian advance

against Posen from Russian Poland, and against Breslau and Silesia from Galicia.

The natural difficulties of Russia's strategic position in a war of offence were obvious, and they were not decreased by the nature of her communications. A report of General Kuropatkin as War Minister, written in 1900, summarized a situation which for Russia had not materially improved. In the West, both in France and Germany, railways and canals had been considered from the strategic point of view. They were admirably adapted for concentration on important points; all vital bridges and tunnels were provided with explosive chambers, and, when necessary, were heavily fortified. But in the East the preparation was one-sided. Germany had seventeen lines of railway leading to the Russian frontier, which would enable her to send five hundred troop trains daily, so that she could concentrate some fourteen to sixteen army corps on that border within a few days of the declaration of war. On the Russian side there were only five railway lines. So, too, with Austria. The Carpathians had been pierced by seven railways, so that Galicia had become like a glacis of the Austrian fort, where in a short space she could concentrate over 1,000,000 men, while on her eight lines she could run two hundred and sixty trains to the frontier every twenty-four hours. As against this, Russia had only four lines. Further, the German gauge was in force as far east as Warsaw, so Germany could run across the frontier from her internal bases without detraining.

The German Staff had long foreseen the possibility of Germany being involved in a war such as the present—with Austria in alliance, Italy neutral, and France, Russia, and Britain engaged against her. It was the German doctrine of war that the offensive supplied the best defence. If she were assailed on both sides she must crush one enemy before turning to the other. Time was at the heart of her problem, for a protracted struggle might mean starvation, bankruptcy, and, consequently, defeat. Her first movement would naturally be directed against the West. There her frontier was strongly defended. The great fortified areas of Metz and Thionville stood as outposts, and behind them was the line of the Rhine fortresses—Neu-Breisach, Strassburg, Mayence, Coblenz, Cologne—not to speak of the Rhine itself, where almost every bridge was strongly fortified. On the East the position was far less secure. The Vistula, the Warta, and the Oder, though by no means contemptible, were not natural barriers like the Rhine; the eastern fortresses, with the exception of Königsberg, had



not the strength of the western ; and the difficult nature of the country and the immense length—some 500 miles—of the frontier, made an offensive, proceeding from a not too secure base, terribly liable to a counterstroke. There was also the difficulty that, for the defence of her right flank on the East, Germany must trust to Austria, and such vicarious security was repugnant to the orderly mind of her General Staff. There was the further trouble about Italy. Though nominally an ally, neutrality was the most that could be hoped from her, and at any moment she might be drawn into active hostility. In the latter case she would take Austria in the rear by way of the Trentino and Trieste ; and Austria, with Russia in front, Italy behind, and Serbia on her flank, would be in no position to safeguard her share of the Eastern frontier. It was, therefore, highly necessary to strike a deadly blow as early as possible at France, in order to confirm the wavering neutrality of Italy, and to enable Germany to concentrate her attention on the East, where lay what seemed to many of her people to be the graver danger.

Now, a swift blow at France was only possible through Luxembourg and Belgium. A glance at the map will reveal the reason.\* A frontal attack on the frontier barrier, Verdun-Belfort, would be a matter of months. An entry by the Gap of Metz would not only expose her armies to a flank attack by a force coming up from behind Verdun, but would compel her to pour many hundreds of thousands of men through a bottle neck not more than thirty miles wide. This would mean that many corps, with their trains, would be packed on the same road, that the lines of supply would be overburdened, that all communications would have to be transferred to the middle Rhine, leaving the bridges and railways of the lower Rhine half idle. Such a step would be to court disaster. Germany needed a wide "out-march" for her front, and this could only be got by buying, begging, or forcing a passage through Luxembourg and Belgium. This would enable her to turn the eastern fortress barrier of France, and to open a direct advance from the north-east on the Marne valley, which was for Germany the key to Paris. Any loss of reputation she might incur by high-handed action in Belgium would be more than compensated for by its great strategic benefits. Belgium was the key of the whole problem in the West. If it were held inviolable, France's strategical position was good ; if not, the advantage lay conspicuously with Germany.

\* See p. 178.

The last question, which bears on strategical position, concerns the *moral* of the troops, their enthusiasm for war, and their confidence in the goodness of their cause. In this there was little to choose between the combatants. Russia believed herself to be engaged in a holy war; France was fighting for her life against her secular enemy; Britain was drawing the sword for public honour and the free ideals of her empire against the massed forces of autocracy and reaction. Austria may have been somewhat half-hearted, for she had been made a catspaw of by Germany, but she had her long grievance against Serbia to avenge, and she had as a spur the terror of the advancing Slav. Not least was Germany confident in her cause. What seemed to the world an act of brigandage and bad faith was to her only the natural instinct of self-preservation. To the ordinary German the Triple Entente was a vast conspiracy to hem in Germany, and prevent her from gaining the expansion which her vigour demanded. Germany must fight some day unless she were to be crushed, and the sooner the better before Russia became too strong. She believed that in such a war she was certain to win, since France was decadent, Britain contemptible by land, and Russia not yet prepared. Her spies had gone abroad through the globe and reported the omens happy. The British navy might be stronger than the German, but the latter could, at any rate, cripple its power; and she believed, moreover, that Britain had no stomach for war, and would speedily seek a profitable peace. Let us also grant that something more than self-preservation and material aggrandizement entered into the German ideal. There was the exhilaration of one strong people *contra mundum*, and the belief that German nationalism was fighting for its honour. We may admit that when men like Haeckel and Wundt, Harnack and Eucken, declared that theirs was a war for civilization, they did sincerely believe that something noble and worthy was in danger.

#### IV.

The forces disposed for the struggle were thus tolerably patent so far as weight and quantity were concerned, though their quality was still to be assessed. The first round must be fought by strengths already established, and only in the event of the result being indecisive would the chance occur for the less-known factors to come into play. Of these the most indefinable was the manpower of Britain, for her picked army was only a first wave of a

torrent to be later unloosed, the volume of which was as yet unplumbed. But in the opening days of war signs were not wanting that the volume would be formidable, for the British Empire awoke to life with an energy not surpassed by the most compact territorial units, and, since the muster of that Empire was the extreme opposite both in principle and method of the German assembly, we may glance in this place at the beginning of an epic which was to grow in power and majesty up to the last hour of the campaign.

In normal times the British Commonwealth had been a loose, friendly aggregation, more conscious of its looseness than of its unity. The South African War had given it a short-lived solidarity; but with peace the fervour passed, and each colony and dominion went busily on its own road. Workers for union found themselves faced with many strong centrifugal forces, and had often reason to despair of making their dream a reality. To foreign observers, who could not discern its hidden strength, it seemed as if the Empire were moving towards an amicable dissolution, or, at the best, a weak alliance of independent nations. This was notably the view held in Germany. Britain, in German eyes, had not the vitality to organize her territories for a common purpose. Canada was drifting towards the United States; Australasia and South Africa towards complete separation; and India was a powder magazine needing but a spark to blow sky-high the jerrybuilt fabric of British authority. The view was natural, for to Germany empire meant a machine, where each part was under the exact control of a central power. To her local autonomy seemed only a confession of weakness, and the bonds of kinship an idle sentiment. The British conception of empire, on the other hand, was the reverse of mechanical. She believed that the liberty of the parts was necessary to the stability of the whole, and that her Empire, which had grown "as the trees grow while men sleep," was a living organism far more enduring than any machine. She had blundered often, but had never lost sight of the ideals of Burke and Chatham. She had created a spiritual bond—

"Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff  
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps."

By the gift of liberty she had made the conquered her equals and her allies, and the very men she had fought and beaten became in her extremity her passionate defenders.

The response of the British Commonwealth was a landmark

in British history, greater, perhaps, than the war which was its cause. No man can read without emotion the tale of those early days in August, when from every quarter of the globe there poured in appeals for the right to share in our struggle. There was loyalty in it, but there was more than loyalty; every free dominion felt that its own liberty was threatened by Germany's challenge as much as that of France and Belgium. Canada, the "eldest daughter," had many sections of her people who in the past had disclaimed any responsibility for our foreign policy, and had hugged the notion of Canadian aloofness in a European war. Suddenly these voices died away. She had been passing through a time of severe economic troubles; these were forgotten, and all her resources were flung open in the cause of the Allies. Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier united their forces, and party activity ceased. As in the South African War, a field force was promptly offered, and a division of all arms was accepted by the British Government. The call for volunteers was responded to with wild enthusiasm. In a few days more than 100,000 men had offered themselves. Old members of Strathcona's Horse and the Royal Canadians clamoured for re-enlistment; rich citizens vied with each other in securing equipment and batteries; and large sums were raised to provide for the dependants of those who were to serve. Every public man in Canada played his part. French-Canadians stood side by side with the descendants of the Family Compact; and the men of the western plains, the best shots and the hardest riders on earth, journeyed great distances to proffer their services to the King. The various Canadian steamship companies offered their vessels to the British Government for transport. The Canadian cruisers *Niobe* and *Rainbow* were handed over to the Admiralty for purposes of commerce protection, and two submarines were offered for general service.

Newfoundland increased her Naval Reserve strength to 1,000, and sent 500 men to the Expeditionary Force. Australia and New Zealand, which possessed a system of national service, were not behind Canada in loyalty. The former placed all the vessels of the Australian navy at the Admiralty's disposal, and undertook to raise and equip an Expeditionary Force of 20,000 men and a Light Horse Brigade of 6,000. The New Zealand Expeditionary Force was fixed at 8,000 of all arms, and 200 Maoris were accepted for service in Egypt. In South Africa the people had had unique experience of war, and both British and Dutch



were eager to join the British field army. Many old officers of Boer commandos came to London to enlist, and the home-coming steamers were full of lean, sunburnt young men from Rhodesia bent on the same errand. The chiefs of the Basutos and the Barotses offered their aid ; as did the East African Masai, the chiefs of the Baganda, and the emirs of Northern Nigeria. The Union Government released all British troops for service outside South Africa, and, amid immense popular enthusiasm, General Botha called out the local levies for a campaign against German South-West Africa, and put himself at their head. The most brilliant of Britain's recent opponents in the field had become a British general. Besides these offers of men and money, help in kind was forthcoming from every corner of the Empire. The smaller Crown colonies which could not provide troops could at any rate send supplies. No unit of the Empire, however small or however remote, was backward in this noble emulation.

But it was the performance of India which took the world by surprise and thrilled every British heart—India, whose alleged disloyalty was the main factor in German calculations. There were roughly 70,000 British troops on the Indian establishment, and a native army consisting of 130 regiments of infantry, 39 regiments of cavalry, the Corps of Guides, and ten regiments of Gurkhas who were mercenaries hired from the independent kingdom of Nepal. The native army was composed of various race and caste regiments, representing the many Indian peoples who in the past century and a half had been brought under the sway of the British Raj. In a war for the existence of the Empire it was inevitable that that army, one of the strongest of the Empire's forces, should be given a share. Moreover, it had an old grudge against the Germans. Indian troops had accompanied the Allies, under von Waldersee, to China in 1900, and had been contemptuously used by German men and officers. The oldest and proudest races on earth, accustomed to be treated on equal terms by English gentlemen, resented the German talk of "coolies" and "niggers," and the memory of an Indian soldier is long. From the Indian army it was announced that two infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade would be dispatched at once to the seat of war in Europe, while three more cavalry brigades would follow. Meantime the rulers and princes of India had placed their resources at the King-Emperor's call. The twenty-seven larger native states, which maintained Imperial Service troops, offered their armies, and from twelve of these the Viceroy accepted contingents of cavalry, infantry,

sappers, and transport, besides a camel corps from Bikanir. Various durbars combined to provide hospital ships. The Maharaja of Mysore gave fifty lakhs of rupees to go to the equipment of the Expeditionary Force. Large sums of money and thousands of horses came from Gwalior and Bhopal. Little hill states in the Punjab and Baluchistan gave camels and drivers. The Maharaja of Rewa offered his troops, his treasury, and even his private jewels, and asked simply, "What orders has my King for me?" The chiefs of the Khyber and Chitral tribes sent messages proffering help; Kashmir sent money, as did every chief in the Bombay Presidency; while the Maharaja Holkar offered the horses of his army. Tiny statelets, islanded in the forests of Central India, clamoured to share. From beyond the border, Nepal placed her incomparable Gurkhas at the service of Britain, and gave three lakhs of rupees to purchase field guns. And the Dalai Lama, forgetting the march to Lhasa, and remembering only our hospitality during his exile, offered 1,000 Tibetan troops, and informed the King that lamas through the length and breadth of Tibet were praying for the success of British arms and for the happiness of the souls of the fallen.

Almost every Indian chief offered personal service in the field, and when no other way was possible the Aga Khan, the spiritual ruler of 60,000,000 souls, volunteered to fight as a private in the ranks. It was wisely decided that some of the great princes should accompany their men and show by their presence in the West that India and Britain were one. To read the list of those selected was to see as in a pageant the tale of British India. First came Sir Pertab Singh, a major-general in the British army, who long ago had sworn that he would not die in his bed, and now, at seventy years of age, rode out to the greatest of his wars. With him went other gallant Rajputs, the Maharajas of Bikanir and Jodhpur; the young Maharaja of Patiala, the head of the Sikhs; the chiefs of the great Mohammedan states of Bhopal, Jaoram, and Sachin. Every great name in India was represented in this chivalry; and never in India's history had such a muster been known. Chiefs whose ancestry went back to the days of Alexander, and whose forefathers had warred against each other and against Britain on many a desperate field, were now assembled with one spirit and one purpose and under one king. Nor was this all. Leagues of Indians throughout the world sent their blessings on the campaign. The long and bitter nationalist agitation disappeared as if by magic, and its leaders rallied their countrymen to Britain's aid. The

small farmers of the south sent their horses ; Bengalis, who could not enlist, organized ambulances and hospitals ; and peasant women throughout all India, not content with giving their sons and brothers to the cause, offered the humble jewels which were their only wealth. Such depths of sacrifice are too sacred for common praise. The British soldiers and civilians who had found lonely graves between Himalaya and Cape Comorin had not lived and died in vain, when the result of their toil was this splendid and unfaltering loyalty.

The effect upon the people of Britain of this rally of the Empire was a sense of an immense new comradeship which stirred the least emotional. For, consider what it meant. Geographically it brought under one banner the trapper of Athabasca, the stockman of Victoria, the Dutch farmer from the back-veld, the tribesman from the Khyber, the gillie from the Scottish hills, and the youth from the London back streets. Racially it united Mongol and Aryan, Teuton and Celt ; politically it drew to the side of the Canadian democrat the Indian feudatory whose land was still mediæval ; spiritually it joined Christianity in all its forms with the creeds of Islam, Buddha, Brahma, and a thousand little unknown gods. The British Commonwealth had revealed itself as that wonderful thing for which its makers had striven and prayed—a union based not upon statute and officialdom, but upon the eternal simplicities of the human spirit. Small wonder that the news stimulated recruiting in England. Every young man with blood in his veins felt that in such a cause and in such a company it was just and pleasant to give his all. Not less profound was the effect of the muster upon our allies across the Channel. No longer, as in 1870, did France stand alone. The German armies might be thundering at her gates, and the fields of Belgium soaked in blood ; but the avenger was drawing nigh, and the ends of the earth were hastening to her aid.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FIRST SHOTS.

*4th August—15th August.*

**The New Factors in War—The German Plan—The French Plan—The German *Aufmarsch*—The Defences of Belgium—The Attack on the Liège Forts—The French Move into Alsace.**

As the minds of both soldiers and civilians bent themselves to the great contest, it was inevitable that they should be busied with forecasts. All agreed that the war would be of a magnitude never known before in history, and that most of the problems would be different in kind from those of the past. During the last half century revolution had succeeded revolution. The invention of the internal combustion engine had provided motor transport and airplanes. Field telephones and wireless telegraphy had altered the system of communication among troops. The cannon had passed through a series of bewildering metamorphoses, till it had reached the 75 mm. field gun and the mighty siege howitzer. No single weapon of war but had a hundredfold increased its range and precision. The old minor tactics, the old transport and intelligence methods were now, it appeared, as completely out of date as the stage coach and the China clipper. There would be no room in the Higher Command for the brilliant guesses, the sudden unexpected strokes, or the personal heroisms of old days. It would no longer be necessary to divine, like Wellington at Assaye, what was happening behind a hill. In one sense, many argued, the problem would be simpler, at least it would have fewer elements; but these elements would be difficult to control, and, from their novelty, impossible to estimate. There was a general agreement that modern war was a venture into the unknown, and that while the existence of the new factors was plain, their working was incalculable.

Let us glance at some of these new factors. The chief was the vast numbers now destined for the battlefield. The greatest



action of the old régime was the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, but there the combatants numbered only 472,000. At Sadowa there were 436,000, at Gravelotte 300,000.\* In the Russo-Japanese war the armies had been greater—Mukden, for example, had been fought on a front of eighty miles, had lasted for three weeks, and had engaged 700,000 men. But in the coming war it was plain that the number of troops, the length of front, and the duration of actions must be indefinitely enlarged. The improvement in firearms would itself, as Schlieffen had pointed out in 1909, lead to a great extension of fighting front. The handling of such masses over such an area meant that railways would be of the first importance. Moltke, in 1870, had foreseen this, and his successors in the German command had practised his teaching. They held, probably with truth, the view that Napoleon's ultimate failure had been due to the fact that his armies had outgrown the technical resources of his age, and they were determined that every resource of contemporary invention should be harnessed in the service of their new millions. Staff work, too, of which Moltke had first made a science, must advance *pari passu* with the growth in complexity of the problems. One special feature also must distinguish this from other struggles. It was the first instance in history of large bodies of men operating in a closely settled country, for in most parts of the garden land of Western Europe there was little freedom of movement. The cultivated nature of the terrain would no doubt simplify the problem of communications, but it would not be easy to find the wide and open battlefield which it was believed that great masses of men would require.

For it was almost universally assumed that the coming war would be a war of movement and manœuvre. The principal reason for this view was that men's minds could not envisage the long continuance of a struggle in which the whole assets of each nation were so utterly pledged. They underestimated the power of human endurance; they believed that modern numbers and modern weapons would make the struggle most desperate but also short, since flesh and blood must soon be brought to the breaking-point. Such a view was possible, because no belligerent had recognized the immense relative increase of strength given by modern weapons to the defence over the attack. One form of defence, the old-fashioned fortress, was indeed rightly underrated by Germany, for she realized that the heavy howitzer directed

\* A useful summary of the numbers engaged in the chief battles of the nineteenth century will be found in Otto Berndt's *Die Zahl im Kriege*.

by aircraft would speedily make havoc of the type of fort upon which France and Belgium still relied.\* But of the impregnability of field entrenchments no combatant was aware till the third month of war.†

The gravest of the new problems was scarcely grasped at the outset. What provision could be made for the Supreme Command? Obviously, even in the case of the army of a single nation, the task of the commander-in-chief would be most intricate. The organizing power of the human brain is limited, and no man could handle a modern army who was not capable of disregarding all but the simple essentials and taking the broad synoptic view. An army must resolve itself into a number of separate commands operating on a general strategic plan. Individual generals must be given a free hand to fight their own battles, provided they conformed to the main scheme. But what of the superior direction of the whole Allied strength? There would be national pride to reckon with, and diverse political interests; different Staff methods; different, perhaps conflicting, theories of war. That this problem did not trouble the minds of statesmen more acutely at the start was due to the fact that the contest was regarded as not likely to be a long one. A decision would be reached before it became practical politics; the thing would be like the clashing of two great forces of nature, and the human mind must in large measure be content to wait humbly on fortune. No man foresaw that presently the whole strength of every belligerent would be involved; that scarcely a corner of the globe would be free from the turmoil; and that the supreme need on each side would be some central direction, political, naval, and military, such as in the Seven Years' War the elder Pitt gave to Britain.

All the world in that early stage failed, it may fairly be said, in prescience. Men looked for too little from the new factors in war, and they looked for too much. They could recognize these factors, but they could not assess them; they guessed that they would revolutionize military practice, but they both underestimated the effect of that revolution in certain details and overestimated it in the greater matters. Even Germany did not wholly foresee the power of heavy pieces in the field or the deadliness of machine guns, and no country envisaged the tactical effect of airplanes, or the possi-

\* In practice, though in theory France held the sound doctrine which had been laid down by Napoleon. See his *Corr.* xiii. 10726, and xviii. 14707.

† See Lord French's remarks in his *1914*, pp. 12-13. The man who foresaw modern conditions most clearly was the pacifist Jean de Bloch, writing at the close of last century.

bility of campaigns in which there would be no flanks to turn, or the power of a modern front to cohere again after it had been pierced, or the way in which the mere elaboration of the machine deprived it of speed and precision, or the influence of the submarine upon the accepted principles of naval war. In these respects the world was blind to the meaning of its own progress. But in other matters it was too ready to believe that the former things had passed away, and to assume a breach with the past. Changes in warfare come slowly to maturity, and the mind of man no sooner stumbles on a poison than it discovers the antidote. Each revolutionary device developed an attendant drawback; so that the resultant, so far as it concerned human talent and endurance, was not greatly different from other wars. Modern inventions, which made possible millions under arms, provided facilities for leading them. The great range and devastating effect of the new artillery were largely counterbalanced by the elaboration of its transport and service. The eternal principles of strategy, determined by the changeless categories of space and time, had not altered, and, after various excursions into heresy, the war in the end was to be won by sound doctrine. The configuration of the earth, in spite of all the new methods of communication, was to decide the form of the campaigns. The ancient battlegrounds, the ancient avenues of advance—the valleys of Somme and Oise, of Aisne and Marne, of Vardar and Tigris, the Pripet marshes, the Palestine coast road—exercised their spell as faithfully over the latest armies as over Roman and Crusader. The new problems were different in scale and complexity, but the same in kind. Surprise, which was believed to have been banished from war, returned most dramatically in the first three months, and appeared at frequent intervals till the great denouement; and a system which was assumed to have made the soldier only a cog in a vast impersonal machine was to demand in a dozen services the extreme of initiative and individual valour, and in the long run to give to the major personalities a power and significance not less than that possessed by any of the great captains of the past.

To a German commander-in-chief the general strategy of an invasion of France was determined by two considerations. The first was the nature of the *Aufmarsch* imposed upon him by the lie of the frontier. The second was the necessity for that immediate disabling blow—that “battle without a morrow”—consequent upon a war waged simultaneously in two separate

theatres. The eastern frontier of France may be divided into three parts: first, the frontier line from Belfort to Verdun, with the gaps in the centre between Toul and Epinal, and in the north between Verdun and the Ardennes, left purposely in order to "canalize" the stream of invasion; secondly, the line of the central Meuse; and, thirdly, the Belgian border on the line Maubeuge-Valenciennes-Lille. A general advance against all parts of that frontier would move with different speeds in each section. In the first it would be likely to beat for some time against the fortress barrier, and in the second the difficult territory of the Ardennes, culminating in the trenchlike valley of the Meuse, was scarcely suitable for rapidity in great armies. Only in the third section, where the country was open and the fortresses far apart, could real speed of movement be attained. Such differences in possible pace pointed to an enveloping movement by the German right as the strategy most likely to succeed. The same conclusion was indicated by the necessity for a crushing blow at the earliest possible moment. For, as Clausewitz had written a hundred years before, the "pit of the stomach of the French monarchy is between Paris and Brussels."

The German strategical plan was based upon two assumptions. Russian mobilization would be slow, and might be safely confided to Austria to deal with for the six weeks which it was estimated would be the time required in which to defeat France. It was, therefore, possible to leave less than one-third of the mobilizable forces on the eastern frontier and concentrate two-thirds on the west. The second was that the blow against France must be in the nature of an encirclement and a surprise encirclement. Only by envelopment could Germany secure a speedy and final decision, and without it she might be forced into an interminable war of exhaustion which would wreck all her plans. Moltke had preached and practised this doctrine, and Schlieffen, when Chief of Staff, had worked it out in full detail as a scheme for the conquest of France. It was his scheme which the German High Command took from its pigeon-hole in the closing days of July. Germany, as the attacker, had the initiative; she could determine the form of battle and make her enemy conform to her will. She aimed at surprise, and had the means of attaining it. Her enemy had to face a variety of possible attacks—by Belgium and the Meuse, by the Ardennes, by the Gap of Lorraine, by southern Alsace. She had decided long ago upon her Belgian policy, while France was entangled with the whimsies of international honour.



France could not know how small a proportion of her forces she had relegated to the East, or the use she proposed to make of her reserve divisions. She was allotting thirty-five corps to the Western front, while the French Staff expected only twenty-two. These great numbers would permit her to send a deluge through Belgium utterly beyond the French calculation, and at the same time allow her to press hard on the French right wing so as to bring about a complete encirclement. For the German plan contemplated a double envelopment—by Belgium and by the Gap of Lorraine.\*

Germany therefore arranged her *Aufmarsch* in three groups. In the north, moving against the French left was more than one-third of her total forces in the West—her I. and II. Armies,† comprising thirteen corps and a mass of cavalry. Directed through the Ardennes against the middle Meuse was the central group—the III., IV., and V. Armies—amounting to fourteen corps. On the left were the VI. and VII. Armies, eight corps strong, based on Metz, and destined for Lorraine. It was approximately Moltke's grouping in 1866 and 1870. The left group, assisted by the left wing of the centre, was to break the French right, while the rest of the centre engaged the French centre, and the great right group enveloped the French left.

Faced with such a threat, France was in serious difficulties. Her plain duty, to begin with, was to fight on the defensive. She did not know where the chief blow was to be delivered. It might come through Belgium or through Lorraine, or, like Schwarzenberg's manœuvre in 1814, through a corner of Switzerland—for Germany had flung all international treaties to the winds. It was her business to be prepared at every point, but how was it to be done? She could not string out her armies in a thin cordon, like *douaniers* along the frontier. "Engage the enemy everywhere and then see" had been one of Napoleon's maxims of war; but the times had changed, and a strategy suited to little armies of 60,000 was out of place in dealing with millions. Yet an adaptation of Napoleon's precept was the only feasible plan. Till the situation was clearer, she should attempt to feel the enemy

\* This is made clear by Freytag-Loringhoven's statement (*Deductions from the World War, 1917*) and by the maps issued to the German troops (see Joseph Reinach's introduction to the French translation of *Die Schlachten an der Marne*). The "Cannae" idea of Schlieffen was still dominant. That a double encirclement was contemplated has been denied by von Tappen (*Bis zur Marne, 1914*), but his views on most subjects have been hotly controverted by his former colleagues.

† Throughout this narrative the armies of the Teutonic League are indicated by Roman numerals—e.g., I.; those of the Allies by the full word—e.g., First.

strength along the whole front, and be prepared with reserves to fling in at the crucial point.

The classic principle in French strategy was a Napoleonic one—that of the “general advanced guard.” The position was too critical to risk everything on a hazard—to use the whole of France’s military power according to a prearranged scheme which might be mistaken. The policy must be opportunist. The first armies must be employed to “fix” the enemy, to retreat if necessary, and to provide opportunity at the right moment for the deadly use of reserves, that “mass of manœuvre” which traditionally was the key to the French plan.\* But the craze for the offensive induced a departure from this policy in favour of a general attack with the right pushed up to the Rhine, which would threaten the flank of the enemy forces moving through Luxembourg and Belgium. Accordingly the French command grouped nine divisions around Belfort, and the twenty-one divisions of the First and Second Armies along the Lorraine frontier, thus allotting one-half of their total available force for an offensive. The Third Army, of nine divisions, lay round Verdun; and the Fifth Army, of twelve divisions, watched the exits from the Ardennes. The Fourth Army, of six divisions, was held in reserve.†

It is easy to criticize these dispositions in the light of later events. They were in fact a mistake, a departure from a sound principle, and the mistake was partly due to imperfect information. The total German strength was underestimated by the French Staff, who accordingly did not allow for the magnitude of the wheel of the enemy’s right wing. For the violation of Belgium they were prepared, but they looked for the attack by the Ardennes and the

\* It seems to me fantastic to identify—as, for example, General Bonnal has done—this general doctrine of the “strategic vanguard” and “mass of manœuvre” with the tactical device of the *bataillon carrée* or “pivoting square” which Napoleon used at Jena. The tactics of one battle should not be used as a Procrustean bed into which to force the strategy of a campaign. Napoleon employed the device beautifully to swing all his corps into the battle line, as soon as Murat’s reconnaissance told him which of two alternatives the enemy was adopting. But in its strict form I do not think he ever used it except at Jena, and it can only lead to confusion to find parallel instances in wholly different types of action, such as Alvensleben’s at Mars-la-Tour on August 16, 1870, and still more in the strategy of a war of movement.

† *First Army*—7th, 8th, 13th, 14th, and 21st Corps and 7th and 8th Cavalry Divisions. *Second Army*—9th, 15th, 16th, 18th, and 20th Corps, 2nd Group of Reserve Divisions, and 2nd and 10th Cavalry Divisions. *Third Army*—4th, 5th, and 6th Corps, 3rd Group of Reserve Divisions, and 7th Cavalry Division. *Fourth Army*—12th, 17th, and Colonial Corps and 9th Cavalry Division. *Fifth Army*—1st, 2nd, 3rd, 10th, 11th Corps, two Reserve divisions, and one Cavalry division. The 1st and 4th Groups of Reserve Divisions remained at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief, as also a Cavalry Corps (1st, 3rd, and 5th Divisions).

Meuse valley; they had never dreamed that Germany could muster sufficient forces for a wide sweep through the Belgian plain. Their intelligence system was defective, and this fault vitiated the careful French plan. The offensive into Lorraine, a sound enough scheme in different circumstances, would scarcely have been undertaken had France realized the huge weight of the German armies of the right. The argument was that if the Germans were strong on their right wing they would be weak on their left, and, alternatively, if they were strong on both wings they must be weak in the centre; therefore if the French right failed, the left would succeed, or, if both were held, the centre would go through. As events developed, the first French operations had the look of the linear strategy, the *morcellement* of the First Republic before the advent of Carnot and Napoleon. But the mistake was a momentary forgetfulness, not a reasoned rejection, of principle, and, since the sound principle remained, it could be retrieved. The advance guard was at the start faultily handled, and fell into grievous straits; but the doctrine of the "mass of manœuvre" survived, to be used when the enemy's impetus slackened. The French strength was to be gravely imperilled but never irrevocably pledged.

The truth seems to be that the French Staff at the outbreak of war, besides its imperfect information as to the enemy's strength, suffered from a divided mind as to its first steps. Their difficulties were great, for before the 4th of August they could not be certain about Italy's neutrality, and they had no means of assessing the precise value of Britain and Belgium in the field. Faced with so many unknown quantities, they chose, instead of a strategical defensive combined with a tactical offensive, the hopeless course of a general offensive in widely separated fields. They permitted their immediate "mass of manœuvre," the Fourth Army, to be thrown into an area the importance of which was not proven. The mistake is the stranger when we remember that Joffre himself has admitted that he realized the possibility of a German advance by the Belgian plain, and that men like Michel and Lanrezac had long advocated this view. The error may be largely attributed to the undue emphasis which had been placed upon the offensive in and out of season. The mind of France had been trained to see in the catastrophe of 1870 a warning against a passive defence, and to believe that in a desperate energy of attack lay at all times the road to victory. This prepossession had been strengthened by the lectures of Foch at the *École de Guerre*, who preached an almost

metaphysical doctrine of the prevailing power of the audacious spirit. Ere the war was finished that great soldier was to learn that patience may be as vital as boldness, and a minute calculation of means as necessary as the "will to conquer." This mystical optimism combined with a grave ignorance of and misreading of facts to bring the French command very near disaster. At a moment when every horizon was misty, and when Britain and Russia needed time to marshal their strength, they all but played into Germany's hands by giving her the chance of that decisive battle which she desired.\*

But as yet the issue was not joined with France. For the moment we have to consider the great German armies manœuvring into position for the attack, and colliding in their assembly with the little Belgian force that guarded the main gate.

On paper the French concentration on the eastern frontier was speedier than the German; but owing to the perfection of her railway system, the number of new strategic lines and sidings on the Luxembourg and Belgian borders, and the long start given by the declaration of the *Kriegsgefahrzustand*, Germany did in fact win the race. It must be granted that the movement of her twenty-one active and thirteen reserve corps to the front of out-march was accomplished with marvellous celerity, when we remember that a corps normally required for its transport 118 trains, and 130 if it were accompanied by its heavy artillery. The I. Army, commanded by Alexander von Kluck, a veteran of the 1870 war, and containing, in addition to their Landwehr brigades, the 2nd, 3rd, 3rd Reserve, 4th, 4th Reserve, 9th and (later) 9th Reserve Corps, assembled in the Aix-la-Chapelle region. On its left the II. Army, under von Bülow, arrived east of Malmédy, with the 10th, 10th Reserve, Guard, Guard Reserve, 7th and 7th Reserve Corps. South was the III. Army, under the Saxon general, von Hausen,

\* This view, which a foreigner is bound to offer with hesitation, has been vigorously stated by many French writers. See especially Thomasson's *Le Revers de 1914 et ses Causes*, General Palat's *La Grande Guerre sur le Front Occidental*, Victor Margueritte's *Au Bord du Gouffre*, General Malletierre's *Etudes et Impressions de Guerre*, F. Engerand's *Le Secret de la Frontière*, Reinach's *La Guerre sur le Front Occidental*, Lanrezac's *Le Plan de Campagne Français et le Premier Mois de Guerre*, and the report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Briey coalfields, 1918-19. The defence of the General Staff will be found in General Berthaut's *L'Erreur de 1914. Réponse aux Critiques*. General Michel in 1910, when Chief of Staff, proposed an Army of the North of 500,000 men, on the line Maubeuge-Dunkirk; an Army of the East of the same size between Belfort and Mézières; and a Reserve Army of 250,000. To get the men, he proposed to incorporate reserve formations, as the Germans actually did in 1914. He found not a single supporter either in the Government or the General Staff.



with the 12th, 12th Reserve, 11th and 19th Corps. These three armies were the group assigned for the march through Belgium and the northern envelopment of the French. The IV. Army, under Duke Albrecht of Württemberg—the connecting link in the advance—had the 8th, 8th Reserve, 18th and 18th Reserve Corps, and concentrated in the Pronsfeld-Gerolstein region, with its march directed towards the Semoy and the southern Ardennes. The V. Army, under the Imperial Crown Prince, with the 13th, 6th, 6th Reserve, 16th, 5th and 5th Reserve Corps, was based on Trèves, looking towards the Gap of Stenay. On its left, in front of Sarrebrück, the VI. Army, the Bavarians under their Crown Prince, comprising the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Bavarian Corps, the 1st Bavarian Reserve, and the 21st Corps, had before them the Gap of Lorraine. The small VII. Army, under von Heeringen, assembling east of the Vosges and north of Sarrebourg, embraced the 14th and 14th Reserve Corps and part of the 15th Reserve. A detachment under von Deimling, consisting principally of the 15th Corps, watched Alsace from the neighbourhood of Colmar.

The supreme direction of the Army of the West, as of the whole armed strength of the German Empire, was vested in the Emperor as War Lord, but in practice the command was in the hands of the Chief of the General Staff. At the moment this post was held by Lieutenant-General Helmuth von Moltke, a nephew of the victor of 1870. He was then a man of sixty-six, who had served as a subaltern in the Franco-Prussian War, had been for some time a lecturer in the Berlin Military Academy, had in 1891 become Adjutant to the Emperor, and in 1906 had succeeded von Schlieffen as Chief of Staff. He was known to the world as a learned and accomplished soldier and a successful commander at manœuvres, while to his countrymen his name seemed of happy augury. The first Moltke had broken the French Empire; the second would shatter the French Republic and the Empire of Britain.

But the peculiar situation caused by the attitude of Belgium compelled Germany to send an advance guard to make ready the path through the northern gate for her great armies of the right. Covering troops from Westphalia and Hanover, belonging mainly to the 7th and 10th Corps of Bülow's II. Army, were detailed for this purpose. These were six brigades of infantry, which were strengthened and converted into mixed brigades by the addition to each of a cavalry squadron, a brigade of field artillery, and a Jäger battalion. This force was placed under General von Emmich,

the commander of the 10th Corps, and directed to seize Liége by a *coup de main*. At the same time the 2nd and 4th Cavalry Divisions, under von der Marwitz, were ordered to the north of Liége, and in the south the 9th, 5th, and Guard cavalry divisions moved into position in the Ardennes and along the Meuse to protect the concentration of the II. and III. Armies from the interference of French cavalry. On the morning of Tuesday, 4th August, Marwitz had seized Visé, crossed the Meuse, and entered Belgium, and late that evening Emmich's scouts came into touch with the Belgian pickets.

The chief routes into Belgium from the Rhine valley are four. There is the ingress through Luxembourg into the Southern Ardennes, and so to the central Meuse valley; there is the route from the German frontier camp of Malmédy to Stavelot, which would give access to the Northern Ardennes and to the Meuse at Dinant, Namur, and Huy; there is the great route from Aix *via* Verviers, by the main line between Paris and Berlin, down the valley of the Vesdre to Liége; and, lastly, there is the direct route by road from Aix to the crossing of the Meuse at Visé, on the very edge of the Dutch frontier. All four routes were requisitioned. But for Germany's immediate purpose the vital entry was the gap of ten miles between the Dutch border and the Ardennes, the bottle-neck of the Belgian plain, with the fortress of Liége in the gate. There the Meuse runs in a deep trench between two masses of upland. On the north lies a tableland which extends for fifty miles to the vicinity of Louvain; on the south and east is the hill country of the Ardennes, a land of ridges and forests, broken by the glens of swift-running streams, which fall west and north and south to the Meuse. The sides of the trench are sharply cut, and generally clothed with scrub oak and beeches. The alluvial bottom is the site of many industries; railways follow both banks of the river, and the smoke from a hundred factory and colliery chimneys darkens the sky. It is the Black Country of Belgium, and, like our own Black Country, is neighbour to the clean pastoral hills. Strategically, the bordering uplands are very different in character. The Ardennes are rough and broken, easy to defend, and difficult for large armies to move in; while the northern tableland is a plain covered with crops of beetroot and cereals, presenting no serious obstacle to any invader. North-east and east of Liége the Meuse valley broadens into the Dutch flats. The natural defence of Belgium from the east might be said to cease with the winning of the upland crest north of the city.

Liège itself lies astride the main stream of the Meuse and the second channel which receives the waters of the Ourthe and the Vesdre. It occupies the flat between the northern plateau and the river, spreading eastwards down the valley, and climbing westwards towards the plateau in steep, crooked streets. The city had no defences in itself, the old walls having gone, and the old citadel being merely a relic on a hill-top. It contained many bridges, the most important of which was the railway bridge of Val-Benoît, which carried the main line from Germany across the Meuse. From the railway station this line was borne to the northern plateau on a high embankment, called the *Plan incliné*, through which the roadways passed under vaulted gateways. Special engines were used to push the trains up the hills, till the junction of Ans was reached on the edge of the plateau, whence there was a level run to Brussels. Obviously such a position had great capacities for defence, and these were made use of in the series of forts constructed by Henri Alexis Brialmont for the Belgian Government between the years 1888 and 1892. Brialmont occupies in the modern history of fortifications the place which Vauban held in the old. Born in 1821, he received his first training in military engineering from French officers; but by 1855, when he was a captain on the Belgian General Staff, he had thrown over French models, and was inclined to the new German theories. He aimed at adapting fortresses to meet long-range rifled guns and high-angled shell fire, and rejected the old French star shape, with bastioned ramparts and intricate outworks, for the German type of long front and detached forts. The approval of Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol, confirmed him in his views. His first great work was the fortifications of Antwerp, completed in 1868. In 1883 he designed for the Rumanian Government the gigantic defences of Bucharest, and by 1892 he had completed the defence of the Meuse valley in the forts of Liège and Namur.

Brialmont's typical fort was largely an underground structure. The military engineer of the days before artillery piled up his towers and turrets into a stately castle. But with the advent of the artillerist fortresses began to sink into the earth as their best protection. Brialmont's forts were buried in it. His ordinary design was a low mound, surrounded by a deep ditch, the top of the mound hardly showing above its margin. The mound was cased in concrete and masonry, and roofed with concrete, covered with earth and sods. The top was broken by circular pits, in which, working like pistons, the "cupolas," or gun-turrets, slid up and

down, with just enough movement to bring the gun muzzles above the level of the ground. Internally the mound was like a gigantic molehill, hollowed out into passages and chambers. In this subterranean structure were the quarters of the small garrison, the machinery for manœuvring guns and turrets, the stores of ammunition and supplies, the electric lighting arrangements, and the ventilating fans. The whole fort was like a low-freeboard turret ship sunk in the ground, and it was fought much as the barbettes of a battleship are fought in action. Its garrison was a crew of engineers and mechanics, who obtained access to it by an inclined tunnel. Brialmont made of any place to be fortified a ring fortress, surrounding it with such forts as have been described, so as to command the main approaches. He assumed that lines of trenches and redoubts for infantry, as well as gun-pits for artillery, would be constructed in the ground between them, as what he called a "safety circle," to prevent raids between the forts at night or in misty weather. This important point in his plan seems to have been generally forgotten, while the one weak spot, an infantry defence for the fort itself by means of a parapet lined with riflemen, was zealously clung to by his countrymen—a complication as useless as devising positions for small-arm men round the sides of a Dreadnought.

The Liége defences consisted of six main forts of the pentagonal type, and six lesser forts, or *fortins*, triangular in shape. It is necessary to note these exactly if we are to understand the events which follow. Beginning at the north end, at the point nearest to the Dutch frontier, we find the fort of Pontisse on rising ground close to the canal on the left bank of the Meuse. From this point it is some nine miles to Eysden, the nearest Dutch village; and the undefended gap in the Belgian frontier—to strengthen which no step seems to have been taken—may be put at between five and six miles. This was the gap which the German attack on Visé was intended to seize. South-east across the Meuse stood the fort of Barchon, and south from it the *fortin* of Evegnée. South, again, came the large fort of Fléron, commanding one railway line to Aix. South-west lay the two *fortins*, Chaudfontaine and Embourg, on opposite sides of the Vesdre, commanding the main line to Germany *via* Verviers. Westwards in the circle we cross the Ourthe valley, and reach the fort of Boncelles, which commanded the hilly ground between the Ourthe and the Meuse. North from Boncelles, on the plateau beyond the Meuse, stood three important defences—the fort of Flemalle at the south end,



the *fortin* of Hollogne, and the vital fort of Loncin, which commanded the junction of Ans and the railways which ran from Liège north and west across the plateau. Lastly, between Loncin and Pontisse lay the two lesser *fortins* of Lantin and Liers. The forts made an irregular circle around the city, the average distance of each from the centre being about four miles; the greatest distance between any two forts was 7,000 yards, and the average less than 4,000. In theory they formed a double line of defence, so that if one fell its neighbours to the left and right should still be able to hold the enemy. At one or two points the invaders might come under the fire of as many as four forts. The garrison of each was small, for there was no room in them for numbers—some eighty men at the most, engineers, gunners, and a handful of riflemen to hold the parapets. The noise, heat, and confinement made the service the most trying conceivable, and during the attack on Liège the defenders found that they could not swallow food or compose themselves to sleep, even when sleep was permitted. The armaments were two 6-inch guns, four 4.7-inch, two 8-inch mortars, and four light quick-firers for the forts; two 6-inch, two 4.7-inch, one or two 8-inch mortars, and three quick-firers for the *fortins*. Liège mounted a total of some 400 pieces.

The old Belgian army had been organized on the basis of conscription with paid substitution, which virtually produced a force of professional volunteers. By the reforms of 1909 and 1913 the principle of a "nation in arms" was introduced; the term of service was put at thirteen years, and the strength on mobilization was fixed at 150,000 for the field army, 130,000 for the fortress garrisons, and a reserve of 60,000—a total of 340,000 men. Unfortunately, these reforms were not completed by 1914, and the total available was only 263,000, which, on the assumption that the fortress garrisons could not be reduced, left no more than 133,000 for the field. To bring the field force up to the required standard, it was found necessary to call upon the Civic Guard, one of the last survivors of the old National Guards of Europe. Belgium was, therefore, able to put in the field six divisions of infantry and one of cavalry. A division was formed of three "mixed brigades," each consisting of six battalions and three batteries. The field artillery was good, but there were few heavy pieces; the equipment, especially of the infantry, left something to be desired, and no field uniform had been adopted. The Belgian soldier went into battle in the same garb that he wore in peace time on parade.

The difficulty of the situation was that Belgium could have no settled plan of campaign. She had to face many ways and watch all her neighbours, and in her peace dispositions had one division in Flanders with an eye on England, one at Liège with an eye on Germany, and two near the French frontier to deal with France. After the German ultimatum, and not till then, the whole army faced eastward. On 4th August the Belgian forces were still in process of mobilization on the line of the river Dyle covering Brussels and Antwerp. The church bells were still ringing their summons at midnight, and the dogs were being collected from the milk carts to draw the mitrailleuses. The 1st Division was moved from Ghent to Tirlemont, the 2nd from Antwerp to Louvain, the 5th from Mons to Pervyse, the 6th from Brussels to Wavre. The movements were protected by the cavalry division, concentrated at Gembloux and moving on Waremmes, and two detached mixed brigades at Tongres and Huy. The 3rd Division was rushed to Liège, and the civic guard of that city took their stand by the side of the regulars. At full strength the force should have numbered over 30,000 men; but as the mobilization was incomplete, it was little more than 20,000. The defenders of Liège were in the same position as the attackers—an improvised force, hastily put together and imperfectly equipped. No stranger medley of colour could be found in Europe than such a field army which lacked a field dress—the men of the line in their blue and white; the *chasseurs à pied* with their peaked caps, green and yellow uniforms, and flowing capes; and the Civic Guard, with their high, round hats and red facings. Little could be done in two days to improvise defences; but gangs of colliers and navvies were set to work to dig trenches and throw up breastworks, and the village of Bonnelles and various houses, spinneys, and even churches, which obviously obstructed the line of fire, were levelled to the ground. By the afternoon of Tuesday, 4th August, the Belgians held the line of the south-eastern forts from Bonnelles to Barchon, and cavalry patrols covered the gap between Pontisse and the Dutch frontier.

The army of Liège was under the command of General Leman, an officer of engineers and commandant of the Military School, who had worked under Brialmont on the Antwerp and Meuse defences, and was regarded as the foremost living representative of his views. At the outbreak of war he was between fifty and sixty years of age—a grave, silent man, who inspired respect rather than enthusiasm in his followers. Obviously, he could do no

more than play for time. His business was to make such a stand on the line of the southern forts as would delay the enemy for a day or two. Then the city, in the absence of either redoubts between the forts or a strong field army, must inevitably fall, but its fate did not necessarily mean the end of the resistance. The northern forts could still hold out till the enemy should force the plateau from the city, or, advancing from Visé or Huy, should take them on the flank. This meant time, and till they fell there was no progress by rail from Liége towards the Belgian plain. It was Leman's aim to hold on as long as possible to the forts commanding the railway between Liége and Namur, for by that road the French would come. If three days were gained it would be something; if a week it would be much; for daily, hourly, the little Belgian army looked west for the arrival of its allies of France and Britain.

Germany did not rate Belgian valour high, and believed that Emmich's advanced guard had an easy task before them; for in spite of her elaborate intelligence system, she seemed to have no instruments delicate enough to gauge the spirit of a people. She did not realize that Belgium had acquired an army, and something more potent than armies—a vivid national self-consciousness and a stalwart patriotism. For two thousand years the little country had been the cockpit of Europe. On her soil Cæsar had crushed the resistance of Gaul; France had won her nationhood; the dwellers by the North Sea had fought for liberty against Spain; Louis XIV. had seen his ambitions frustrated; and Napoleon had dreamed his last dream. In her position, to retain sovereign rights involved a sleepless vigilance and an infinite sacrifice. When the hour came Belgium was ready, and her faith was found in the words of her king: "A country which defends itself cannot perish." Germany forgot that liberty and nationhood cannot be assessed in marketable terms, and that there are wrongs for which there is no compensation. She had not reckoned with the Belgian spirit. To her it seemed, as Stein said of the Tugendbund, "the rage of dreaming sheep," and her fury was the measure of her surprise.

On the night of Tuesday the 4th, as we have seen, Leman's pickets came into touch with Emmich's vanguard, and about 11.30 that night the citizens of Liége heard the beginning of a great cannonade. The Germans, coming down the Ourthe and the Vesdre, were attacking the forts of Bonnelles, Embourg, Chaudfontaine, and Fléron with long-range fire over the woods, the guns

being laid by the map. Their heavy pieces had not yet come up, and the fire was high-explosive shell from ordinary field artillery. The guns of the forts replied, but did little damage, as the enemy positions in that broken country were easily concealed. The artillery duel went on through the night, and on the morning of Wednesday, the 5th, a flag of truce was sent to Lemans demanding a passage. The Belgian general refused, and an infantry attack was launched forthwith between Embourg and Bonnelles. It was beaten off with heavy loss to the assault. That afternoon Emmich received reinforcements from the 10th Corps, and the van of Kluck's infantry, the 9th Corps, having crossed the river at Visé, began to move on Liège from the north-east. In the afternoon the Germans, hard pressed for time and now strengthened by a supply of medium heavy pieces, opened a new bombardment, which damaged Fléron by smashing the mechanism of its cupolas. All night the German infantry attacked, regardless of losses, and by the morning of the 6th their 14th Brigade had filtered through the circle of forts, and was marching on the city. By that afternoon the Belgian infantry and artillery were falling back on Liège, for Lemans had decided that the place of his 3rd Division was with the field army now mustering behind the river Gette. The retreat was necessarily hurried, and there was no time to destroy the Meuse bridges; but Lemans succeeded in his purpose, and himself took up position in Fort Loncin, which commanded the plateau and the railway line to France.

That night the 14th German Brigade encamped on the heights of La Chartreuse, overlooking the city. Its general having fallen, it was led by the deputy Chief of Staff of Bülow's II. Army, who had been sent to accompany Emmich. His name was von Ludendorff, and at one time he had been chief of the operations section of the General Staff, where he had come into conflict with the Imperial Chancellor on the subject of the army estimates. It is a name which will appear many times in the course of this history, and now his quickness of conception and high personal courage were mainly responsible for the German success. On the morning of the 7th he went alone with the brigade adjutant to the citadel of Liège and received its surrender. Terms were arranged with the Burgomaster and the Bishop, and the Germans marched in.

The line of the southern forts had been pierced, though none of them had yet fallen. But it was the forts on the north bank of the Meuse in which lay the chief strategic value; for, so long as they were untaken, the great railway lines could not be



used, and for the German advance Liége was a terminus and not a junction. Emmich had had enough of frontal infantry attacks and inadequate bombardments. He suffered Leman in the north forts to remain in peace till he had brought up his siege train. Meantime, to the east and west of the city, the German advance continued. Stores of all kinds poured into Liége, the pontoon bridges at Visé were completed, and the great batteries of Kluck's army were brought on to Belgian soil. Two German cavalry divisions advanced to test the crossings of the Gette, along the western bank of which lay the main Belgian force of five divisions. On Sunday, the 9th, German cavalry had advanced to various points well inside the frontier. The method was the same in most cases. Cavalry, often preceded by scouts in armed motor cars, entered a town, seized certain prominent citizens as hostages, lowered the Belgian flag, and demanded supplies. The cavalry had only emergency rations and no supply wagons. There was a good deal of terrorizing, but few serious outrages, for they had not yet felt the spirit of Belgian resistance. On Tuesday, the 11th, the German front ran from Hasselt on the right through St. Trond to Waremmé. Various Belgian detachments, chiefly cavalry, had been thrown forward to form an irregular screen against the German advance. On the 11th, word had come of a French movement across the Sambre, and the Belgian right was extended in the direction of Enghezee, to join hands with it. But the rumour was unfounded; the French mobilization was still in process, and the French Commander-in-Chief had decided not to move a brigade till it was completed.

On Wednesday, the 12th, the German cavalry screen came into touch with the Belgians at various places. Its right advanced from Hasselt down the little river Gette towards the small unfortified town of Diest, with the object of outflanking the Belgian field force on the Dyle. At the village of Haelen, a mile or two south-east of the town, they encountered a Belgian force which had barricaded the river bridges. The Germans were a detachment of cavalry, with some machine guns, and a weak brigade of infantry in support. They made a determined effort to rush the bridges with their infantry, but were beaten back, and the charge of the Belgian cavalry on the flanks completed their rout. They had been guilty of the mistake of underestimating the enemy, and had made no artillery preparations for the assault. This battle among cornfields was fought with great determination, and in front of the bridges the dead lay in heaps. The Germans

succeeded, however, in carrying off their wounded; and the defeat was not crushing, for there was no serious attempt at pursuit. On the afternoon of the same day a German column crossed the Gette above Haelen, and tried to force the bridge at Cortenaecken, on its tributary the Velpe. For four hours the Belgians contested the passage, and the enemy was beaten off. Next day this series of desultory actions was continued by an attack of 2,000 German cavalry on the town of Tirlémont; which was driven back by the fire of Belgian infantry. Far on the German left, at Enghezee, close to the field of Ramillies, and almost within range of the forts of Namur, a German cavalry detachment which had bivouacked in the village was surprised by a sortie of Belgian cavalry and cyclists from Namur. They were expelled in confusion, leaving their machine guns and some forty dead behind them.

The result of these skirmishes—for they were scarcely more, being entirely affairs of outposts—was to inspire the Belgian soldiers with immense self-confidence, and lead them to despise the military prowess of the invaders. Man for man, they had proved themselves superior to the renowned Uhlans, and the clumsiness of German cavalry tactics roused their contempt. The Belgian plain was not the best ground for cavalry work, and the small number of infantry employed by the enemy was of little use against the well-chosen Belgian positions. Yet it must be admitted that these five days of skirmishing had achieved the end which the German commander intended. The cavalry had acted as a true screen, and had moved right up to the edge of the Gette line. Telegrams from Belgium during that week implied that no German infantry in any strength had crossed the Meuse, which proved that the screen had done its work; for at that very moment, when the great armies of Kluck and Bülow were placing their last troops on Belgian soil, the Belgians still rated the force inside their frontier at a couple of cavalry divisions and a few oddments of foot and artillery. The French Staff suffered from the same defective intelligence. Sordet's cavalry corps of three divisions had crossed the Belgian frontier on the 6th, and on the 8th was within a few miles of Liége. But neither then, nor in their later reconnaissances on the 11th and the 15th, did they discover the strength of the German infantry, which was the vital problem before the defence. The German cavalry screen fell back, but was never pierced. This lack of exact knowledge among the Entente Staff is shown further by the fact that Sir John French on the

18th, and even so late as the 21st, believed that the forts at Liège were still untaken.\*

Meantime detachments from the II. Army, which had concentrated south of Kluck, were feeling their way up the Meuse valley towards Namur. On Wednesday, the 12th, its advanced guards seized the town of Huy, which stood half-way between Namur and Liège, and was out of the danger zone of the forts of both cities. The old citadel, long dismantled and used as a storehouse, had no guns wherewith to command the bridge; and though Belgian posts offered some resistance, the Huy crossing was soon in German hands. The capture of Huy put the invader astride of the main line from Aix to France by way of Liège; but at present it was of little use to him, since the northern forts of Liège still commanded its most vital point. It gave him, however, a branch line, running directly north from Huy across the plain to Landen and the heart of Belgium.

On the 11th the main siege train began to arrive at Liège. Barchon had already fallen on the 9th, and Evegnée on the 10th, to the German field pieces, and at midday on the 12th the final bombardment began. The heavy artillery used was mainly the 28-centimetre (11-inch), but it seems that a certain number of the 42-centimetre (16-inch) howitzers were also in action.† Pontisse, Embourg, and Chaudfontaine fell on the 13th, Fléron on the 14th. That day Bonnelles was summoned to surrender, and on its refusal was bombarded for twenty-four hours. The electric light apparatus was destroyed, and through the night the defenders fought on in a suffocating darkness. By six o'clock on the morning of the 15th the concrete chambers began to fall in, several of the cupolas were smashed, and shells penetrated the roof and burst inside the fort itself. Surrender was inevitable, and the gallant commander hoisted a white flag, after a resistance of eleven days. Nothing was left of the fort but a heap of ruins.

Meanwhile the bombardment of Loncin, which General Leman stubbornly held for Belgium, was continued without rest. It was commanded by reverse fire; that is to say, the 11-inch howitzers were trained on it from the direction of the city, and all the pentagonal forts of Brialmont were weak on the side which at normal times was not that which fronted the enemy. The heavy shell fire, as at Bonnelles, smashed the cement framework and the

\* 1914, pp. 41, 48.

† Ludendorff's *My War Memories* (Eng. trans.), p. 39; Mühlton's *Diary* (quoting von Einem), p. 79; Kluck's *The March on Paris* (Eng. trans.), p. 20.

cupolas; and seems to have exploded the magazine, for at 5.20 p.m. on the 15th the whole fort blew up. The few defenders left alive were half dead from suffocation. Only one shot was fired—by a man with his left hand, his right having been blown away. General Leman was found unconscious, his body pinned by falling beams, and his life in grave danger from poisoning by noxious fumes. He was carried to Emmich, whom he had met two years before at manœuvres. His captor congratulated him on his heroic resistance, and gave him back his sword. "I thank you," was the answer of this soldier of few words. "War is a different sort of job from manœuvres. I ask you to bear witness that you found me unconscious."

For eleven days the forts of Liège had stood out against the enemy, and blocked his main advance. It may fairly be said that their resistance put back the German time-table by at least seventy-two hours, and by that space of time hindered Kluck from reaching the main battlefield. Of what immense consequence was that delay this narrative will show. On it depended in all likelihood the salvation of the Entente armies and the defeat of the German plan. Without it, the British Army and the French Fifth Army might well have been destroyed. That was a great thing in itself, but those eleven days of fighting made an impression upon the world out of all proportion to their results. The true significance of the Belgian stand was that it pricked the bubble of German invincibility. A great nation, which for a generation had given itself up to the study of war, and had boasted throughout the world of its army, found itself held in the gates by a little unmilitary people that it despised. It was much that Belgium should defy Germany; it was more that she should make good her defiance. The triumph was moral—an advertisement to the world that the ancient faiths of country and duty could still nerve the arm for battle, and that the German idol, for all its splendour, had feet of clay.

At the other end of the Western battlefield the first week of war revealed a premature activity. As Germany with half-mobilized troops attacked the Belgian line in the north, France with troops in the same condition made a movement against Upper Alsace in the south. The wedge of plain between the Vosges and the Swiss frontier was a natural line of advance against Germany, for it had behind it to the west the French fortified position of Belfort, and it gave easy access to the upper Rhine. But a



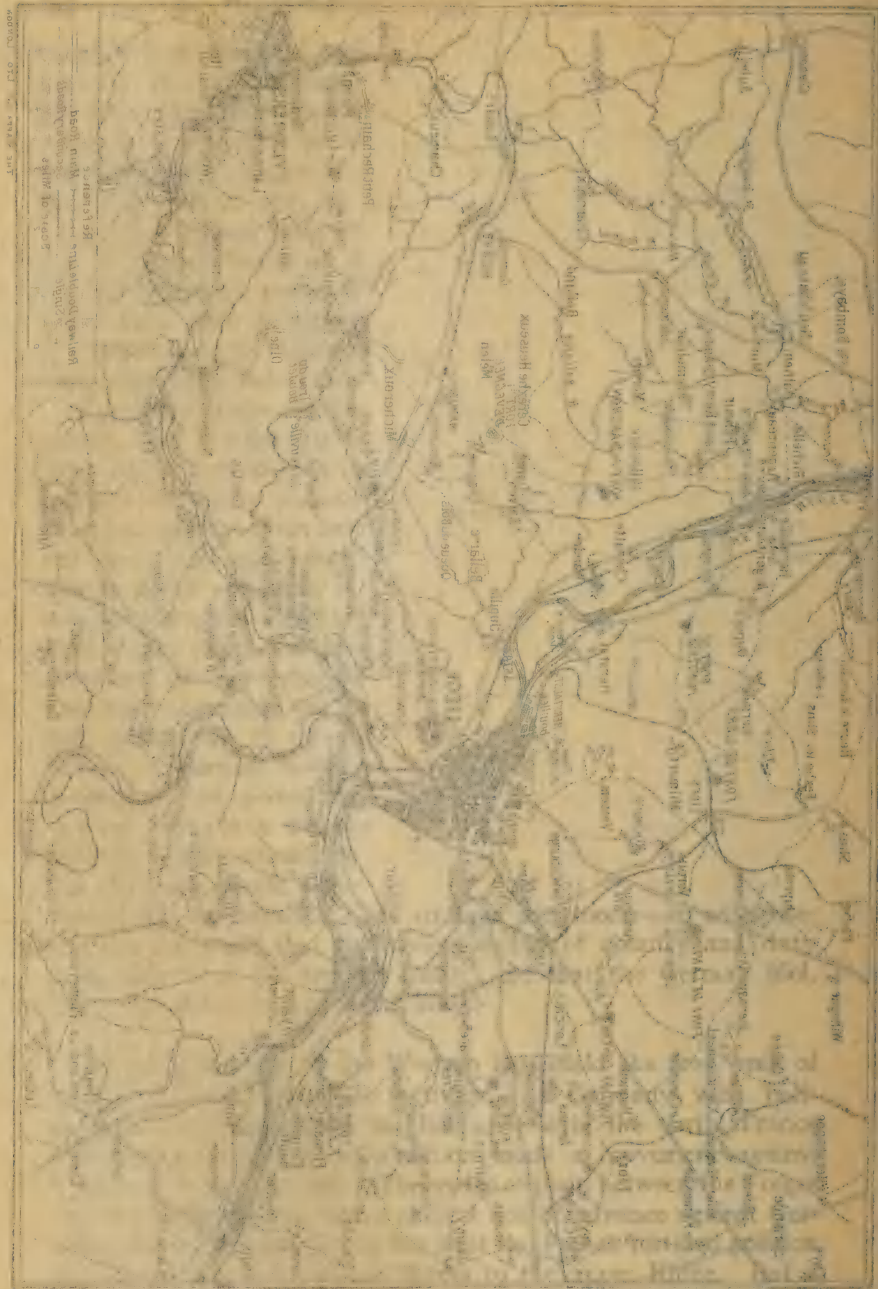


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# LIÈGE.

(Facing p. 134.)

FIGURE



(Plate B. 124)

serious advance was only possible for a strong field army, for north, guarding the river valley, lay the great German fortresses of Neu-Breisach and Strassburg. What happened during this week was an affair of weak advanced guards. It was reported by French airplanes that the Germans were holding the right bank of the Rhine, and on the left bank had only small detachments; so it was decided to attempt to occupy the country up to the river. What good a weak occupation could do does not appear, for it was at the mercy of larger masses operating from the German fortresses. Late on the evening of Friday the 7th, the day when Emmich entered Liège, troops from the Belfort garrison crossed the frontier and drove back small German detachments which were entrenched at Altkirch. The pursuing cavalry came into contact with German rearguards, and were unable to press their advantage; but the town was evacuated, and the French entered amid great demonstrations of popular joy. Next morning they continued their way unopposed to Mulhouse, an important manufacturing town without permanent fortifications, and to their surprise found the entrenchments deserted. Desultory fighting was carried on with a German force—about a brigade strong—in the neighbouring woods; but the resistance was insignificant, and, unfortunately, gave the French a false idea of their opponents' condition. They were disillusioned next day, the 9th, when large bodies of Germans, coming from the direction of Colmar and Neu-Breisach, began to close in on Mulhouse from the north and east. The French commander, knowing his position untenable, evacuated the town early on Monday morning, 10th August, and occupied a position a little to the south. Finding the enemy in strength, he returned to Altkirch, some twelve miles from the French frontier.

The raid—for it was nothing more—had no military significance, and seems to have been hampered by faulty reconnaissances on the part of the French airmen. Its political purpose was proved by the message of General Joffre, published in Altkirch and Mulhouse. The enterprise was an advertisement to the lost provinces that the day of their deliverance was at hand. Nowhere were the memories of 1870 so ineradicable as in Alsace-Lorraine; nowhere was the Prussian military system, as exhibited in incidents like that of Zabern, so hateful. But the announcement was addressed even more to the people of France. It was necessary, in the view of the French leaders, to give to their countrymen at the outset of the great struggle some dramatic episode to fire their imagina-

tions and typify the purpose of the war. What more dramatic than a raid into Alsace with a message of emancipation? A wise general, drawing upon a nation in arms, will not disdain to remember popular emotions. The incident had its effect. On the Monday afternoon, 10th August, when Paris had the news of the taking of Mulhouse, but not of its evacuation, there was a great assembly in the Place de la Concorde. The centre of interest was the Strassburg statue, draped those many years with crape, but bearing on its escutcheon the proud words, "*Qui vive? France quand-même!*" In a reverent silence the signs of mourning were removed. If the tricolour did not yet float above the spires of the Alsatian city, the march of the deliverers had begun.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BATTLE JOINED IN THE WEST.

*15th August—24th August.*

**The French Mobilization—Joffre—His Change of Plan—Failure of the Advance in Lorraine and the Southern Ardennes—The First Clash of the Main Armies—Fall of Namur—Battle of Charleroi—The British Expeditionary Force—Mons—The Retreat begins.**

THE war preparation of France began at 9 p.m. on 31st July with the moving of the covering troops, a task completed by midday on 3rd August. The mobilization proper started on 2nd August, and the concentration at midday on 5th August. By noon on the 12th the more urgent transport movements had been completed, and between that day and midnight on the 18th the main work was accomplished. It was a brilliant performance, the more as the original destination of four corps was changed during its progress. On the 18th the First Army under Dubail lay between Belfort and the line Mirecourt—Lunéville, Castelnau's Second Army thence to the Moselle, the Third Army, under Ruffey, from the Moselle to Verdun, and Lanrezac's Fifth Army along the Meuse and the Belgian frontier. The general reserve, the Fourth Army under de Langle de Cary, lay east of Commercy. The French forces faced Germany on the ancient frontier line of the Vosges, the Moselle, and the Meuse.

Between 1875 and 1914 there had been no less than forty Ministers of War in France and seventeen Chiefs of the General Staff. An organization subject to so many vicissitudes of control must necessarily have suffered in efficiency. Politics had played a great part in military appointments, and there was a lack of central authority in controlling the various services of war. When M. Millerand, to whom the modern French army owed much, went to the War Office, he relied especially on three officers for the working out of his schemes of reform. The great and well-deserved popular reputations of the day belonged to those generals, such as

Galliéni, Lyautey, and d'Amade, who had recently won distinction in North Africa, Madagascar, and Tonkin. M. Millerand's three were almost unknown to the man in the street. One was Pau, who had left an arm on the battlefields of 1870, adored by the rank and file, to whom he was "le premier troupier du monde," but only a name to the world of politics and society. A second was Castelnau, a man of singular gentleness and nobility of spirit, and the possessor of a mathematical brain which excelled in problems like mobilization. The third was Joseph Césaire Joffre, an engineer officer sprung from bourgeois stock in the Eastern Pyrenees. He had first come into note in the Timbuctu expedition of 1893-4, and had later served in Madagascar. In 1910 he had become a member of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, and a year later had become its vice-president, succeeding Michel, and being preferred to Pau and Gallieni. He was an anti-clerical and a strenuous republican, but he allowed no intrigues of party or sect to bias his judgment. In the three years of his vice-presidency he had done much to reform the machine, but he had had little influence on strategical thought. He was not, like Foch, a great military student and thinker, and he accepted what was given him in that line, devoting himself to the concrete preparation in detail which he understood. He represented character rather than mind, and, as it happened, it was character which France needed most in the hour of crisis. His honesty was to enable him to make the drastic changes for which events clamoured; his modesty and intellectual candour allowed him to revise plan after plan; above all, his steadfast courage, his infinite patience, and his kindly simplicity gave to his countrymen a leader whom they could regard with confidence, respect, and love. We shall see him unchanged both by sunshine and shadow, in good and evil report the same bluff, shrewd, wise paternal being—one who, as Bossuet said of Turenne, could fight without anger, win without ambition, and triumph without vanity.

Of the other French commanders now in the field, de Langle de Cary, who had been aide-de-camp to Trochu in 1870, was recalled by Joffre from the retired list; Dubail, Ruffey, and Castelnau were members of the Conseil Supérieur. Ruffey was soon to disappear, but of the other two this history will have much to say. Lanrezac, also a member of the Conseil and a man of first-rate ability, was in revolt against the accepted French strategy, and was presently to suffer for his heterodoxy. He alone of the acting command seems to have divined Germany's plan and to

have had the courage to oppose his chiefs. But France was no exception to the rule that the men who finish a war are rarely those who begin it. Just as the chief German soldier was now only deputy chief of staff to a single army, and the future British commander was in charge of a corps, so the true leaders of France were still in subordinate posts, at the head of divisions, brigades, even of regiments. The greatest of all was a corps commander in the Second Army.

As the concentration was completed, the forces of the Entente which moved eastward to the shock were not greatly, if at all, exceeded by those of the enemy. It is a point which needs to be emphasized, for nonsensical legends circulated at the time in France and Britain. France had slightly more first-line divisions in the field than Germany; if we add the Belgian and British contingents, she had a clear superiority. In total numbers the two sides in the West were approximately equal. But while the French reserve divisions were ill trained, ill armed, ill supplied, and destined only for minor tasks, the German reserve formations were troops of shock, capable of use in the first line. Moreover, in heavy artillery, in the use of airplanes for reconnaissance and with the guns, in motor transport, in the art of field entrenchment, and in general tactical training the enemy had a real superiority. Lastly, the Germans had the initiative and a strategical plan prepared with infinite care, while France was about to commit herself to a mistaken theory and an ill-considered adventure. The French armies at the start were not outnumbered, but in almost everything but fighting spirit they were outclassed; and Germany by her skill was able to fight her first battles with a great local superiority of men.

On 10th August the French contingent in Alsace was back at Altkirch, and Mulhouse was again in German hands. It had been only a raid and a reconnaissance, and preparations now began for that Lorraine offensive which was the first step in the French plan. The object of this advance was to turn the left of the main German force advancing through Luxembourg and the Ardennes, to secure the Briey coalfields by the investment or capture of Metz, and by the seizure of the bridgeheads of the upper Rhine to interfere with the communications of the German V., VI., and VII. Armies. It was reckoned that Heeringen's army was the weakest of the German forces, and would have difficulty in holding the country between the Vosges and the Rhine. Accordingly, on the 10th, an Alsace group was formed under Pau

of the strength of three corps. The first effort was to clear the Vosges passes, which were held by weak German forces, and which must be captured in order to safeguard the flank of any advance from Belfort or Nancy. On the French side long river glens lead up to the summit, but on the east there is a sharp descent towards the Alsatian plain. The first to be taken was the Ballon d'Alsace, at the south end of the range, which carried with it the control of the Col de Bussang. Farther north they took the Hohneck and Schlucht passes, which brought them to the great central boss of the ridge. Here the task became more difficult, as the approach from the French side was now steep, and the hillsides were densely wooded, while on the gentler slopes of the Alsatian side the Germans had field fortifications held by heavy guns. There was some sharp fighting, in which the Chasseurs Alpains played a notable part, and successively the Col du Bonhomme and the Col de Sainte-Marie were taken. The last and most difficult was the Pass of Saales, on which they advanced from St. Dié. They won it by occupying the plateau of Blacques, and this gave them not only the possession of Mont Donon, the great northern *massif* of the Vosges, but allowed them to enter the valley of the Bruche, which led directly to Strassburg.

The capture of Mont Donon, on the 14th, enabled the First and Second armies and the Alsace group to begin their main advance. The last from the outset was successful. It took Dannemarie and Thann, and wedged the extreme German left between the Rhine and the Swiss frontier. On the 19th, at Dornach, it had 3,000 prisoners, and next day re-entered Mulhouse. Meantime Castelnau with the Second Army and Dubail with the First—a total of nine active and three reserve corps—moved eastward, Castelnau by the Seille and the Gap of Morhange and Dubail on his right into the Sarre valley. They had scarcely started when orders came to detach from the Second Army the 9th and 18th Corps and send them northward to Lanrezac, while three African divisions on their way to Alsace were deflected for the same purpose. For, on the 15th, Joffre heard for the first time that German forces were moving through Liége *en route* for the Belgian plain, though he had as yet no notion of their size. The northern attack was not coming only by the Ardennes, and he must extend his left to meet it. Accordingly he ordered the Fifth Army to move up into Belgium and occupy the angle formed by the Sambre and the Meuse, and the Fourth Army—the general reserve—to link up with the Third Army by taking the place left vacant



by the Fifth. Already the French general was compelled to reconstruct his plan.

Even with the loss of two corps, Dubail and Castelnau were superior in numbers to the VI. and VII. German Armies opposed to them. But they were operating in difficult country—the woods and marshes of Morhange and the intricacies of the Sarre valley. The enemy had prepared a series of concealed defences, supported by heavy artillery, running from Morville through Morhange to Phalsburg. This line was held in the south by Heeringen's right wing, the centre by the complete strength of the Bavarian VI. Army, and the right by a detachment from the Metz garrison. On the 19th Dubail was at Sarrebourg, and that day Castelnau faced the immense natural strength of the Morhange position. On the left of his Second Army lay the famous 20th Corps of Nancy, under the command of Ferdinand Foch, a southerner of Tarbes, now sixty-three years old. He had been for some time professor at the Ecole de Guerre, and his two great books, *La Conduite de la Guerre* and *Les Principes de la Guerre*, had given him a world-wide reputation. He was beyond question the most famous of living writers on war, and was now afforded the chance of putting into practice the doctrines which he had so convincingly preached. He was the apostle of the offensive, and his first action was to be an offensive which failed—which was bound to fail. At Morhange the new power of the defence was proved beyond cavil.

At 5 a.m. on the 20th Castelnau attacked—the 20th Corps against the heights of Marthil, Baronville, and Conthil, with as its objective the capture of Morhange and a nodal point of the railways; on its left rear was a group of reserve divisions, and on its right the 15th. At once the assault was brought under a deadly fire from concealed positions, which do not seem to have been properly reconnoitred. It was a repetition on a huge scale of Emmich's experience at Liège. The reserve divisions on the left were attacked by fresh enemy forces from Metz, but held their own; the 15th Corps, in a region of marshy ponds, was utterly broken, and at 6.30 a.m. was in flight. The 20th Corps, with its right flank exposed, fought gallantly all day against hopeless odds. At 4 o'clock that afternoon Castelnau ordered a general retirement; he had no other course before him. Dubail, who had been holding his own at Sarrebourg and on the Rhine canal, had to fall back to conform.

So failed the first French offensive. The position was very grave, for there was a wide breach between Castelnau and Dubail,

and through it lay the way to the Gap of Charmes, between Toul and Epinal, which, if the enemy once gained it, would enable him to take in reverse the main armies of France. Or he might concentrate on the capture of Nancy, which would achieve the same result. Happily, the Bavarians were in no condition to press their advantage. Dubail fell back from Mont Donon to a line from Rozelieures to the north end of the Vosges, at right angles to the Second Army and covering the entrance to the Gap of Charmes. Castelnau brought his force behind the Meurthe and the lower Mortagne. The defence of Nancy was left to the group of reserve divisions which we have seen on his left rear, and which were in touch with Foch and what remained of the 20th Corps.\* On the 24th the Germans were in Lunéville; on the 25th Mulhouse was retaken, and Pau's Alsace group was dissolved, for the bulk of it was wanted for the defence of Nancy and the north.

On the evening of the 20th Joffre had news of the failure of the Lorraine offensive and Castelnau's retreat. He had also for five days been aware that considerable German forces were moving north of the Meuse. Yet, faithful to his purpose of the offensive, at a moment when every argument seemed to point to a strengthening of his left wing, he tried the second of his alternatives and gave orders for an advance by his centre into the Belgian Ardennes. Ruffey's Third Army and Langle's Fourth Army were now on the Meuse from Verdun northward. They were directed to cross the river and move into the wooded hills, in order to threaten the flanks both of the Bavarians, now moving on Nancy, and of Kluck and Bülow marching through Belgium. The scheme, had it been strictly limited to a raid and reconnaissance, was not without its merits; but it was no raid, involving, as it did, two of the main French armies and the whole of the general reserve. It seems certain that at the time the French Staff were not aware of the full strength of the IV. and V. German Armies, and were altogether ignorant of the existence of Hausen's III. Army, now concealed among the woods of the north-western Ardennes. Ruffey and Langle moved into impossible country against an enemy superior in numbers, who possessed also the advantage in armament, position, and more accurate intelligence.

The enterprise was short-lived and disastrous. On the 21st the Fourth Army moved beyond the Semoy, with the Third Army in echelon on its right. Langle's objective was roughly the

\* It should be noted that the success of this most difficult retirement was mainly due to the skill with which Dubail handled his First Army.

line Maissin-Ochamps-Neufchâteau-Forest of Rulles, while Ruffey was moving across the upper valleys of the Semoy, Chiers, and Othain towards Virton and Longwy. Almost at once the advance came up against strong prepared positions, which in that tangled country were hard to detect, and was at the same time taken in flank by enemy columns marching from the east. There was insufficient connection, too, between the corps of the attack, so that each unit fought a separate battle. At Palliseul, in the forest of Luchy, and at Rossignol (where Lefebvre's Colonial Corps was all but destroyed) there were desperate combats on the 22nd, and that night Duke Albrecht of Würtemberg drove the French Fourth Army across the Semoy. Ruffey had no better fortune against the Imperial Crown Prince. His 2nd and 4th Corps fought a stiff battle at Virton, and Sarrail's 6th Corps fought stoutly, but no ground was made, and presently the Third Army was back on the Othain. On the 24th Langle had his left west of the Meuse and his right between the Meuse and the Chiers.

The failure of the French offensive gave the Germans the Brier coalfield, by far the most valuable booty which they won in the first months of war. Its little guardian fort, Longwy, under a gallant commander, Colonel Darche, resisted to the last with antiquated works and a garrison of only two infantry battalions and a battery and a half of light guns. It had been surrounded on the 10th, invested on the 20th, and did not fall till the 26th. The performance was a proof of what French valour might have done with the fortresses had they been regarded more seriously in the plans of the General Staff.

On the 15th, as we have seen, Joffre was aware of the German advance into the Belgian plain, and pushed his Fifth Army into the angle between Charleroi, Namur, and Dinant, on the Sambre and Meuse. At the time he estimated the total forces of Kluck and Bülow as six army corps, three divisions of cavalry, and at the outside two or three reserve divisions. He had no inkling of Hausen's III. Army, and he believed that Langle and Ruffey were competent to break the armies of Duke Albrecht of Würtemberg and the Imperial Crown Prince. Namur he considered to be capable of making as stout a defence as the Liége forts, and he held that it would form a good pivot for an advance into Belgium by Lanrezac and the British Army, now in process of concentration, which, if successful, would gain the line Namur-

Brussels—Antwerp. As a protection against raiding cavalry, however, he sent d'Amade to Arras to take command of a group of territorial divisions, and watch the country about Douai and Lille. It was clear to his mind the enemy could not be equally strong in Lorraine, in the Ardennes, and north of the Meuse, and his forward policy would search out the weak spot.

He had miscalculated the speed of the German advance, as he had underestimated its weight. We left the Belgian army still holding the crossings of the Gette against Kluck's vanguards. But once the last Liège forts had fallen, and the trunk line was cleared for traffic, there came the real impact. The invasion swept on like a tide, the cavalry screen fell away, and the Belgian field armies realized what was before them. Their one hope was the French, but the French infantry were far distant, though part of Sordet's cavalry was then across the Sambre and in touch with the Belgian right somewhere near the field of Waterloo. On the 17th Kluck reached the Gette, with three corps flanked by two cavalry divisions. During the morning of the 18th the river was forced at Haelen and Diest, and by the evening its whole line was in German hands. There was nothing for the Belgian command but to retreat behind the Dyle and seek sanctuary. It withdrew, therefore, on the 19th, and by the 20th, as Brialmont had always foreseen, was inside the Antwerp forts, leaving the open city of Brussels to the enemy.

On the 20th, M. Max, the burgomaster of the capital, arranged with the Germans for a peaceful occupation. In return for the free passage of German troops through the city and the reception of a garrison in the local barracks, the enemy undertook to pay in cash for all requisitions, to ensure the safety of the inhabitants, to respect public and private property, and to leave the management of city affairs to the municipality. About 2 p.m. the sound of cannon and military music was heard, and the van of the army of occupation appeared on the Chaussée de Louvain. It was the 4th Corps under General Sixtus von Armin, whom we shall meet again. When the infantry reached the great square in front of the Gare du Nord, they broke into the old Prussian parade step, the legacy of Frederick the Great, to show the importance of the occasion. The German general left the Belgian flag flying on the Hôtel de Ville, but hauled down those of the Allies; he placarded the city with a stern proclamation against acts of aggression on the part of civilians; and presently it was announced that Germany had imposed upon Brussels a war indemnity of



£8,000,000. The occupation in force did not last long, for Kluck had no time for parades. Already his 2nd Corps, after a skirmish at Aerschot, had passed to the north of the capital, and the 3rd Corps had gone through the southern suburbs on the road to Mons, while the 9th was heading for Braine-l'Alleud. The 3rd Reserve and 9th Reserve Corps were detailed to watch the Belgian army in Antwerp. On the morning of the 21st the bulk of the I. Army was swinging south-westwards from Brussels, having reached the line Grammont-Enghien-Hal-Braine-l'Alleud; while the whole of von der Marwitz's cavalry moved westwards in the general direction of Lille, looking for Sir John French. Kluck's huge wheel was behind the German time-table, but far in advance of his opponents' expectation.

Bülow's II. Army had less ground to cover. We have seen that on the 12th he had seized the bridge at Huy, and was rapidly transferring part of his troops to the left bank of the Meuse. On the morning of the 21st he had the better part of five corps north of that river, with their right in touch with Kluck about Genappe, their centre at Gembloux, and their left a mile or two from Namur. Meantime the mysterious III. Army had moved swiftly through the northern Ardennes, where the leafy cover seems to have screened it completely from the French airmen. Its commander, the Saxon von Hausen—like Kluck and Bülow a man of 68—had started with four corps and a cavalry division, but had already surrendered the cavalry division for the Russian front. On the 15th his advance guard had attempted to seize the passage of the Meuse at Dinant, the town eighteen miles south of Namur, where the hills break down in high limestone cliffs to the river. This *coup de main* gave them the old citadel, but they were presently ousted by the arrival of French supports. Hausen's objective was again Dinant, but on the 21st he had detailed the 11th Corps to cooperate with the Guard Reserve Corps of the II. Army in the investment of Namur.

On the morning of the 21st, therefore, the I., II., and III. German Armies were bearing down on the angle of the Sambre and the Meuse in an arc 70 miles long—Kluck with four corps, Bülow with the better part of five, and Hausen with four—a total of at least 25 divisions, supported by a great force of cavalry. Before them lay Lanrezac's Fifth Army, as yet only of four corps, now getting into position on the Sambre, the fortress of Namur, garrisoned by the Belgian 4th Division, and on Lanrezac's left the British army of two corps, the concentration of which was expected

to be completed that day. On the 20th Joffre, from his headquarters far away at Vitry-le-François in Champagne, had given orders for an advance across the Sambre. The British were to move north-east in the direction of Nivelles, between Brussels and Charleroi, while Lanrezac marched against Bülow. The idea of the French Commander-in-Chief was a blow at the flank of the advance through Belgium. He considered the advance of Langle and Ruffey, which began on the 20th, as his main operation, and the attack of Lanrezac and the British as a supporting movement. It was a plan foredoomed to disaster, for, while it took into account Bülow, it ignored Kluck, and knew nothing of Hausen.

In considering this clash of the great armies, we can look upon the situation as composed of three elements—Namur, the fight of Lanrezac against Bülow and Hausen, and the stand of the British against Kluck. The city of Namur stands mainly on a scarp of hill in the angle between Meuse and Sambre. South of it stretch the forested slopes of the central Meuse; east lies the trench valley which runs to Liége; north is the great plain of Belgium; and due west is the vale where the Sambre flows amid coal pits, mounds of debris, and factory chimneys. The place is famous in British history as the scene of one of the chief exploits of William III., who wrested the town from Boufflers under the eyes of Villeroy's great army, and in literature as the theme of the reminiscences of Uncle Toby in *Tristram Shandy*. Its fortifications had been one of Brialmont's masterpieces. Following the same lines as at Liége, he had given it a ring of four forts and five *fortins*, mounting altogether 350 pieces. These forts were at a distance from the city of from two and a half to five miles, and were on the average about two and a half miles distant from each other. Beginning in the north, Cognelée defended the railway to Brussels, while Marchevette occupied the space between it and the Meuse. In the south-east angle made by the rivers stood the three forts of Maizeret, Andoy, and Dave. Between the Meuse and the Sambre were St. Héribert and Malonne, and north of the Sambre, between that river and Fort Cognelée, stood the forts of Suarlée and Emines. All were of the familiar Brialmont type, and the armament was the same as at Liége. The Belgian garrison had ample notice of the German intentions. For ten days the great siege trains had been crawling painfully westwards over the cobbled Belgian roads. Namur was held by

the Belgian general Michel, who, though convinced that the place was impregnable, devoted much time before the enemy appeared to strengthening the defence. Large areas were mined, the field of fire was cleared, entrenchments for infantry were constructed between the forts, and barbed wire entanglements, highly electrified, were erected at the approaches. It should be remembered that he did not expect to defend Namur alone. Long before the first shot was fired he hoped to have the Allies at his back. The blue tunics of the Chasseurs d'Afrique had been seen for some days on Belgian soil, squadrons of French dragoons were on the road to Brussels, and French infantry and artillery were only eighteen miles off at Dinant. Michel seems to have been well aware that the forts alone could not repel the enemy. Remembering one lesson of Liége, he gave special attention to the intermediate infantry.

For a day or two the weather along the Meuse had been close and misty—the summer heat-haze common in that valley. Late on the evening of Thursday, 20th August, the howitzers<sup>■</sup> were in position under the screen of haze, some three miles from the Belgian trenches. The German troops of assault were the Guard Reserve Corps from the II. and the 11th Corps from the III. Army. Michel learned now, what many other commanders were to learn afterwards, that he had let the enemy get too close—an enemy who would not be guilty of Emmich's blunder at Liége, but would use the full strength of his artillery before he launched his infantry. The first shots were fired on that sultry Thursday evening, and the fire was directed on the trenches between Forts Cognelée and Marchovelette. Through the whole night it continued with amazing accuracy, and since the Germans were out of range of the Belgian guns there was no means of replying. The unfortunate Belgians had no chance for a rush with the bayonet, as at Liége—they had simply to wait and suffer; and after ten hours, whole regiments having been decimated, the thing became insupportable. Early on the morning of Friday, the 21st, the infantry withdrew from the trenches, and the Germans entered within the ring of the forts, taking up a position on the ridge of St. Marc, just north of the city.

The real bombardment began at 10 a.m. on the 21st, and

■ These were the Austrian 30.5 cm. pieces from the Skoda Works. According to their commander, Colonel Albert Langer (*N.F. Presse*, Vienna, February 18, 1915), they came—at any rate the bulk of them—by Verviers, and only left Cologne on 15th August.

before long the forts Marchovelette and Maizeret were silenced. Maizeret had received shells at the rate of twenty a minute, and had only been able to fire ten shots in reply. Marchovelette held out till it was blown up on the next day. About the same time—that is, early on the morning of Friday, the 21st—the III. Army on the right bank of the Meuse directed a terrific bombardment against Forts Andoy, Dave, St. Héribert, and Malonne, and a German force was pushed across the Meuse into the southern part of the angle between it and the Sambre. All that day an infantry battle continued, for the Belgians hoped for a French advance from Dinant to their relief. But, as we shall see, the French at Dinant had their hands full with their own affairs. On the Saturday morning part of the French 8th Brigade under General Mangin arrived, but they were too late to give much assistance. That day, when the skies were darkened by an eclipse of the sun, panic reigned in Namur. Incendiary bombs were dropped by German airplanes, and stray shells crashed into the outlying buildings. The weather was heavy with thunder, and Nature and man combined to create pandemonium.

Some time on that Saturday Michel, seeing that resistance was futile, and desiring, like Leman at Liége, to save his force for the field army, drew off many of his troops by the western route, which was still open. No provision had been made for a retreat, and it soon became a case of *sauve qui peut*. Only the north-western forts were standing, and the infantry battle in the angle between the rivers had resulted in the defeat of the French and Belgians. The Germans coming from the south joined with those on the ridge of St. Marc, and so were able to take in the rear the defenders of the trenches between Forts Emynes and Cognelée. The Belgians in the river angle were compelled to escape as best they could, and their only outlet was to the south-west. The enemy had shut the gate at Bois de Villers, but two Belgian regiments hacked a road through and managed to reach Philippeville. On their way they found themselves entangled with a French army coming south from the Charleroi direction, and had their first news of the retreat of the whole Allied line. Eventually, by way of Hirson, Laon, and Amiens, they came in seven days to Rouen, whence they took ship to Ostend, and joined the main Belgian forces.

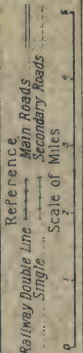
On Sunday afternoon, the 23rd, the Germans entered Namur, singing their part-songs. The advanced guard narrowly escaped





THE MAPPA CO. LTD., LONDON.

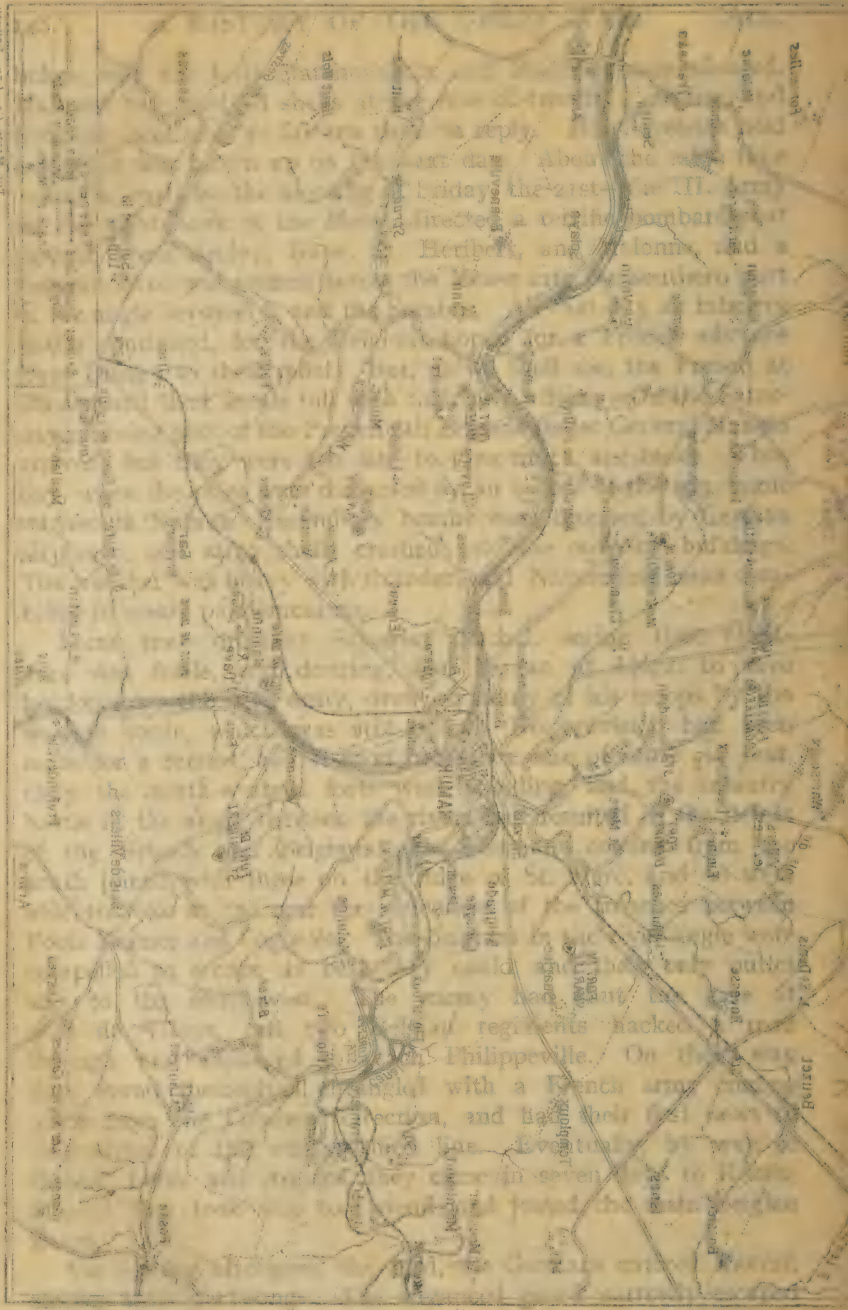
# NAMUR.



(Facing p. 148.)

# BUMAI

THE BRIDGE CO. INC. PHOENIX



(Facing N 1/2 E)

destruction, for the Germans north-east of the city, unaware that their troops had entered from the south, kept shelling the Citadel and the Grande Place. That night Namur was set afire in parts, whether by accident or design no one knew. Next day Bülow entered the place, and with him the new military Governor of Belgium, Field-Marshal von der Goltz, who was described by an observer as "an elderly gentleman covered with orders, buttoned in an overcoat up to his nose, above which gleamed a pair of enormous glasses." The conquerors did not behave badly. They took hostages, demanded the surrender of all arms, and issued, after the German fashion, a vast number of proclamations. Presently the great armies surged southwards, and left the occupation of the city to reservists. The last stand of the Belgians was made at the north-west segment of the fortress ring. Fort Suarlée held out gallantly till the morning of Tuesday, 25th August, when it was blown to pieces. Part of its garrison and that of Emines escaped southwards to the woods on the north bank of the Sambre. There they were surrounded, and surrendered to the number of 800 early on the 26th. The first shot had been fired on the evening of 20th August; by the next night five or six forts had fallen; by the 23rd the Germans held Namur, and by the 25th the last forts had gone. So much for the impregnable city. The shade of Boufflers must have rejoiced at so fantastic a consummation.

Namur had been the pivot of the French position. Lanrezac held an angle, and the loss of the apex of that angle meant that each of the two sides was outflanked. It is time to return to the French Fifth Army, which on the 20th was still laboriously getting into position. Lanrezac, who had pressed for an earlier advance into Belgium, only received Joffre's orders to cross the Sambre on the 20th; and in any case he could not have moved earlier, owing to the adjustments necessary to send troops to Langle and Ruffey beyond the Meuse. On Friday, the 21st, part of his army was still concentrating, for the advance had been fixed for the 23rd, by which time the British would have been well started on their flank wheel. On the 20th he had only two corps on the south bank of the Sambre. On the 21st his right wing, Franchet d'Esperey's 1st Corps, was on the Meuse north of Dinant, fronting east; the 10th Corps held the heights south of the Sambre between Charleroi and Namur, facing the Sambre crossings; the 3rd Corps lay before the town of Charleroi; and the 18th Corps, not



yet up, was to be echeloned on the left, south of Thuin. Most of his reserve divisions were not yet in their place. Through no fault of his own, he had to accept battle on ground not of his choosing and at a time appointed by the enemy. For, on the morning of the 21st, Bülow had reached the north bank of the river, wheeling by his left, and by midday the action had begun with an attack by the German Guard on the bridges of Tamines and Auvelais, held by the French 10th Corps. By 2.30 p.m. they were across the stream, and ere nightfall held the village of Arsimont, two miles to the south of it. At the same time the German 10th Corps forced the river just east of Charleroi, and on the German right the 7th Corps was on the Charleroi-Mons road. Bülow that night had won the first stage, and prepared the ground for his deployment.

Saturday, the 22nd, saw the main Battle of Charleroi. The French 10th Corps, struggling desperately on the right, retook Arsimont, but lost it as the great weight of German artillery began to make itself felt. The French had not yet the German science of entrenchment; they had too few guns, and their most gallant charges were futile against a wary enemy. Farther west there was fierce fighting in the streets of Charleroi, where the Turcos of the 37th (African) Division took heavy toll of the Prussian Guard. But slowly the French 3rd Corps was forced back, and by the darkening Bülow had shaken himself free of the mining district, and was in position four miles south of the Sambre. But Lanrezac did not despair. On his left he had now got up his 18th Corps, which was holding both sides of the Sambre at Thuin, and his 1st Corps at Dinant, having been relieved by the 51st Reserve Division, was available to reinforce his shaken right. Thinking that he had only Bülow to deal with, he sent word to the British Commander-in-Chief at Mons that evening asking him to strike north-eastward at Bülow's flank. Sir John French rightly declined. He had already had news of Kluck.

On Sunday, the 23rd, Lanrezac attacked with his right—the 1st Corps and a reserve division—from the high ground about Mettet. But his centre was already in straits, and the cavalry in front of the 18th Corps on his left was giving ground before Bülow's envelopment. That afternoon the 3rd Corps was retiring in disorder on Walcourt, a place in the latitude of Maubeuge. This was bad enough, but early in the evening came a deluge of ill tidings. Namur, the pivot, was falling—had already fallen. Langle and Ruffey had failed utterly, and they were back on the



Meuse, so nothing was to be hoped for from the Ardennes offensive. A new German army, the Saxon III., had appeared on his right flank, and had taken Dinant. Last, and not least, Kluck had revealed himself against the British—not a matter of one or two corps, as had been supposed, but at least four corps and several cavalry divisions. Lanrezac acted promptly. He dispatched his 1st Corps to Dinant, where it brilliantly disputed the passage of the river with the Saxons. It could not stay the invader, but it delayed him, and saved the communications of the Fifth Army. But he clearly could not stay. The British were in straits, and he was instructed by Joffre to send Sordet's cavalry to their support. That evening he ordered a general retirement, and the first battle in the north was lost to the Allies.

There is no "enigma of Charleroi." The facts are only too fatally clear. Lanrezac fought a gallant fight, and had he had only Bülow to deal with, might have retrieved all on the morning of the 23rd by a flank attack of the 1st Corps on the German left, for the Prussian Guard had been badly shaken. But the 1st Corps, like d'Erlon's at Quatre Bras, had to dissipate its force on two fronts. The battle was lost before it was joined through the mistaken theory and imperfect intelligence of the French General Staff, and under no conceivable circumstances could Lanrezac have succeeded. He had to fight before his army was in position, and when his centre was already tottering he found his flank turned. General Joffre, at a later date, expressed the opinion that Charleroi should have been won,\* but it could not have been won on the plan for which he was responsible. That plan courted disaster, being based on a complete misreading of facts. It is not easy to explain the singular breakdown of the French intelligence. They knew nothing of Hausen and practically nothing of Kluck, though they were aware that great forces under his command had passed through Liège. It is possible that they regarded the bulk of his troops as destined for the Channel ports—a strange plan with which to credit an enemy who had not neglected the study of the science of war.

The fundamental error has long ago been admitted by all competent soldiers. But it is necessary to say one word on the legend, fostered by a distinguished historian, that Lanrezac's misfortunes were in a large part due to the British army.† The

\* Interview with M. Arthur Huc, *Dépêche de Toulouse*, March 1915.

† Gabriel Hanotaux's *L'Enigme de Charleroi*.

accusation is threefold : First, that the British were late in reaching their agreed position—the 23rd instead of the 20th ; second, that Sir John French should have complied with Lanrezac's request for assistance on the 23rd ; third, that it was the premature British retreat which compelled the retreat of the French Fifth Army. For no charge is there the slenderest foundation of fact. If Lanrezac was not wholly in position by the 21st, it was unreasonable to expect Sir John French, who had a day's march farther to go, to be in position by the 20th. Besides, the offensive which Joffre had ordered was not due to begin till the 23rd. The British kept precisely the terms of their arrangement with the French Commander-in-Chief. Secondly, a flank attack by the British against Bülow on the 23rd, with three of Kluck's corps attacking them and a fourth enveloping their left, would have been sheer insanity and an invitation to destruction. Finally, on the 23rd, Lanrezac's corps had been falling back all day, and at 9 o'clock that night the order was given for the general retirement. The main British withdrawal did not begin till the morning of the 24th, and by that time their neighbours had been at least twelve hours in retreat.

We turn now to the doings of Sir John French and his Expeditionary Force.

The state of war with Germany, officially declared by Britain on 4th August, did not in itself commit her to sending an expeditionary force to the Continent ; but the unmistakable trend of public feeling, and the assurance of France that she counted upon our military co-operation, gave the Government no choice. It was resolved to dispatch four infantry divisions at once, to be followed by two more at short intervals. On 6th August the House of Commons, in five minutes, voted a credit of 100 millions, and sanctioned an increase of the army by 500,000 men. The railways had been taken over by the Government, and troops were hurried down, mostly under cover of night, to the various ports of embarkation. The time of crossing varied from eight to fifteen hours. There was no covering fleet, the Grand Fleet in the North Sea being a sufficient protection ; but the British and French navies supplied destroyers as scouts and messengers, and airships and seaplanes kept watch in the sky. The people of Britain knew little of the crossing till Monday, the 17th, when it was officially announced that it was over. In ten days, by a remarkable feat of transport, more than 150,000 men had been landed at various ports in France. Each man carried with him a message from Lord

Kitchener, which admirably summed up the duties of the British soldier in war :—

“ You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common enemy. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience.

“ Remember that the honour of the British army depends on your individual conduct. It will be your duty, not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire, but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in this struggle. The operations in which you are engaged will, for the most part, take place in a friendly country, and you can do your own country no better service than in showing yourself in France and Belgium in the true character of a British soldier.

“ Be invariably courteous, considerate, and kind. Never do anything likely to injure or destroy property, and always look upon looting as a disgraceful act. You are sure to meet with a welcome, and to be trusted ; your conduct must justify that welcome and that trust. Your duty cannot be done unless your health is sound. So keep constantly on your guard against any excesses. In this new experience you may find temptations in wine and women. You must entirely resist both temptations, and, while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy.

“ Do your duty bravely.

“ Fear God.

“ Honour the King.

“ KITCHENER, Field-Marshal.”

The scene at Boulogne may be taken as a type of many. It was just over a hundred years since a British army had landed to fight in Western Europe, but the scene was very different from that before Waterloo, when officers' wives and friends and idle spectators came over to see the show. Jos Sedley with his carriage, the Bareacres's *ménage*, and the ladies of Captain Osborne and Captain Rawdon Crawley had no counterparts in this severe and businesslike expedition. Since the Monday when war became inevitable much anxiety had been felt about the attitude of Britain. As the French mobilization proceeded, military enthusiasm awoke ; it was realized that France was entering upon her greatest struggle, and, though Sir Edward Grey had pledged our help by sea, it was help by land that seemed to the ordinary man to count for most. On the 4th and the 5th, eager eyes watched the destroyers and cruisers in the Channel. Were the English coming, or would they remain secure in their island while their allies were sacrificing homes and fortunes and lives for the common cause? For a

moment the life of an Englishman in Boulogne became difficult; the educated inhabitants looked askance at him, as if Albion had not yet outgrown her perfidy. Only the fisher-folk kept their confidence. They had been to Aberdeen and Ramsgate and Plymouth, and their *confrères* there had always told them that the English would come. "Vous allez voir arriver les *Anglais* bientôt et plus vite que ça!" At last, on the morning of Sunday, 9th August, two transports were sighted making for the harbour. It was "*les Anglais*" at last, and the fishermen were justified. Instantly opinion swung round to the opposite pole, and the name of Briton was a passport in Boulogne that day. The landing of the troops awakened wild enthusiasm. The geniality and fine physique of the men, and their gentleness to women and children; the cavalryman's care of his horses; above all the Highlanders, who were heroes of nursery tales in France, went to the hearts of the people. The old alliance with Scotland was remembered—the days when Buchan and Douglas led the chivalry of France. The badges and numbers of the men were begged for keepsakes, and homely delicacies were pressed upon them in return. Many a Highlander was of the opinion which Alan Breck expressed to David Balfour, "They're a real bonny folk, the French nation." The cavalry were encamped at Ostrohove, just above the Villa Josephine of famous memory. But if we seek for dramatic moments, we shall find them in that midnight Mass, celebrated by the English-speaking clergy of Boulogne for our Catholic soldiers, at the Camp Malbrouck, round the Colonne de la Grande Armée. The name recalled the greatest of British generals; on that spot Napoleon meditated the invasion of England; and—happier omen—there was first assembled the Grand Army, the army of Ulm and Austerlitz and Jena.

On 5th August Lord Kitchener, who had been on the eve of returning to Egypt, was appointed, largely by the urgency of Lord Haldane, as Secretary of State for War. He accepted the post with the gravest sense of responsibility. He did not believe in any short and easy contest, or any campaign of limited liability. To the ordinary Briton he was the foremost subject of the King, a man untainted by party politics, aloof from social intrigue, a single-minded servant of the State. He had had a career of brilliant success, and the nation had faith in his star. From the outset he realized that Britain was ill prepared for a great war on land, but he trusted his countrymen and conceived that such preparation could still be achieved. The struggle, as he saw it, would



last at least three years, and he laid his plans for an army of seventy divisions, which should reach its maximum strength when the enemy's had begun to decline. Though from his long service abroad he was unfamiliar with European problems, his curious *flair* for essentials made him divine the situation more correctly than the experts of the French Staff. He was convinced that the main German thrust would come through Belgium, and he was anxious that the British army should concentrate about Amiens and not at Maubeuge, for he guessed at the broad sweep of Kluck's envelopment, and he did not wish the *moral* of his troops to be impaired by beginning the campaign with a compulsory retirement. On this point he was overruled, but his instructions to the British Commander-in-Chief showed how little confidence he had in the initial French plan. He warned him that he could not be rapidly or strongly reinforced, and that therefore he must husband his reserves. He told him that his command was independent—that he would “in no case come in any sense under the orders of any Allied general.” “While every effort,” he added, “must be made to coincide most sympathetically with the plans and wishes of our Ally, the gravest consideration will devolve upon you as to participation in forward movements where large bodies of French troops are not engaged, and where your force may be unduly exposed to attack.” This caution was wholly justifiable. If Britain in the next three years was to build up great armies, she could not afford to have her nucleus of highly-trained regulars squandered fruitlessly at the outset.

The British Expeditionary Force consisted to begin with of two infantry corps and one cavalry division. The Commander-in-Chief, Field-Marshal Sir John French, had long been considered the best field officer on the British active list. He had served in the Sudan Expedition of 1884-85, and had afterwards held high cavalry commands at home, till, in 1899, he was sent to command the cavalry under Sir George White in the Natal campaign. His was, perhaps the chief reputation made by the South African War. His successes in the Colesberg district, his relief of Kimberley, and his handling of the cavalry in Lord Roberts's advance on Pretoria, marked him out a soldier of exceptional knowledge, judgment, and energy. He commanded the 1st Army Corps from 1901 to 1907, after which he held for four years the post of Inspector-General of the Forces, till in 1911 he became Chief of the Imperial General Staff. In 1913 he was made a field-marshal. He was immersed in his profession, a serious student

of the military thought of Europe ; but his most notable quality was one which is not commonly found in the staff officer. He was a personality rather than a mind—a born leader of men, of tried courage, coolness, and sagacity.

The 1st Corps was under the command of Sir Douglas Haig, a cavalryman like Sir John French, and one of the youngest of British lieutenant-generals. Its 1st Division was under Major-General Lomax, and its 2nd under Major-General Monro. To the 2nd Army Corps had been originally appointed Lieutenant-General Sir James Grierson, but he had died suddenly after the landing of the Expeditionary Force in France. His death was a grave loss to the British army, for no officer was more popular, and none so immensely learned in all branches of the profession of arms. From 1882 onwards he had been in nearly every British war, and had written the standard books on the Russian, German, and Japanese armies. He knew Germany intimately, and few foreigners could judge so truly her strength and weakness. We may well regret that one of the most accomplished staff officers of the day was not spared to prove his worth in his first high fighting command. He was succeeded by General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, who had done brilliant work in South Africa, and had held the Southern command at home since 1912. The 2nd Corps embraced the 3rd and 5th Divisions, the former under Major-General Hubert Hamilton, and the latter under Major-General Sir Charles Fergusson. The Cavalry Division was commanded by Major-General Allenby, who at the outbreak of war held the office of Inspector of Cavalry. The 1st Brigade was commanded by Brigadier-General Briggs, the 2nd by Brigadier-General De Lisle, the 3rd by Brigadier-General Hubert Gough, the 4th by Brigadier-General the Hon. C. Bingham. A separate 5th Brigade was under Brigadier-General Sir Philip Chetwode. The 3rd Corps, under Major-General W. P. Pulteney, was still in process of formation ; but the 4th Division from it, under Major-General Snow, was to concentrate in France on the 23rd August ; and on the lines of communication was the 19th Infantry Brigade.

On Saturday, the 22nd, the British army was a day's march north of the Sambre, getting into position between Condé and Binche. A word must be said of the configuration of this corner of Hainault. West of Mons along the valley of the Haine and the Condé Canal lies a country of flat, marshy meadows. Mons itself is a mining town, the centre of the Borinage coalfield, an area like any north English colliery district. There was a network

of railways, many of them carried on low embankments, and among them the miners' villages, with the headgears of the pits and the tall chimneys of the engine-houses towering above the low-roofed cottages. Around these hamlets the accumulation of shale and waste heaps suggested at first sight ranges of hills, and the illusion was strengthened by the little forests of dwarf firs with which some of the larger heaps had been planted. To the north lay a sandy ridge covered with a wide stretch of woodland, from St. Ghislain six miles west of Mons to a point some three miles east of the town. To the south, after the coalfields were left behind, lay an agricultural region, enclosed on the south by the big wood of Mormal. The place was poor ground for a defensive action, teeming as it was with an industrial population, and endlessly split into enclosures and pockets, which gave no observation or free field of fire. It was a classic battle-ground. There Condé and Turenne had marched their armies; Blücher and Wellington had ridden over those fields; from Mons had come a detachment of burghers to help the English at Crécy; south-west of the town amid a tangle of colliery lines lay Jemappes, where Dumouriez overthrew the Austrians when the French Republicans invaded Belgium; a mile or two farther south was Marlborough's battlefield of Malplaquet.

By the evening of the 22nd the British 2nd Corps lay along the Condé Canal, while the 1st Corps on its right stretched from Mons to the village of Peissant—a front of about 25 miles, held by a force of some 70,000 men and 300 guns. Sir John French had no general reserve, in the absence of his 3rd Corps, and had to use his cavalry as best he could for the purpose. That day the British horse had been scouting far to the north, and had come into contact with parties of Uhlans, and, driving them in, had discovered behind them large infantry columns on the march—in what force they could not tell, for they could not advance farther, and the thick woodlands about Soignies made the country inscrutable to the British airplanes. Our cavalry screen, in turn, prevented the enemy from reconnoitring the British position, but this gave Kluck no anxiety. It had long been Germany's fashion to despise our "mercenaries," and the phrase, "Sir John French's contemptible little army," attributed by some imaginative propagandist to the Emperor, embodied the current opinion in the German army. Further, the German Staff did not believe that British infantry in any number could, as yet, have arrived within fifty miles. On the evening of the 22nd the I. Army had its 4th and 9th Cavalry

Divisions somewhere on the Scheldt, and its 2nd Cavalry Division scouting westward towards Courtrai, Lille, and Tournai. On its left the 9th Corps was on the road from Nivelles to Binche, getting very near the canal; the 3rd Corps was coming down the Brussels-Mons road from Soignies; the 4th Corps had reached the Mons-Ath railway, and the 2nd Corps on the left was south-east of Ath. That night the 3rd and 4th Corps were some five miles from the British outposts, and the two flanking corps between ten and twelve miles distant. It had been a swift march, for the outer corps of the wheel had tramped 150 miles in eleven days, and the men were tired with the dust and heat of the Belgian plain. Late that night Sir John French, anxious about his unprotected left, moved Allenby's cavalry to that flank, with the exception of Chetwode's 5th Brigade, which was in advance on the right.

Sunday, the 23rd, brought a hot August morning, and its first hours passed in a Sabbatical calm, while the bells of the village churches rang for mass. The men in the trenches heard a distant sputter of rifle fire where the German cavalry were feeling at our outposts. Sir John French met his generals, and explained to them Joffre's plan. His information at the moment was that "one, or at most two, of the enemy's army corps, with perhaps one cavalry division, were in front of my positions, and I was aware of no outflanking movement by the enemy." Kluck, though he had not yet half his army in position, did not believe that the main British force was in front of him, and resolved to send his 9th Corps at once into action, and to extend the battle presently with his 3rd Corps. Accordingly, at about 10.30 a.m., he began his artillery preparation, and half an hour later the infantry of the 9th Corps attacked at the angle of the canal north of Mons against Hubert Hamilton's 3rd Division.

The first impression of the British soldier was one of amazement. Instead of the thin and widely extended lines which he had expected he found the enemy coming on in dense masses, which made a wonderful target for his rifle. This was the teaching of Meckel,\* which had recently replaced the old instructions of the German drill book. He found that he could well hold his own, and it was not till the enemy numbers had crossed the canal east of Obourg, and converged upon Mons from north and east, that Hamilton fell back through Mons to a prepared position south of it which linked up with the left of the 1st Corps at Har-

\* See his curious work, *A Summer Night's Dream* (Eng. trans. by Gawne).



mignies. Late in the afternoon the left of Kluck's 3rd Corps and his 4th Corps closed with Sir Charles Fergusson's 5th Division, which at first held its ground on the Canal without difficulty, while on the extreme left there were patrol actions with Allenby's cavalry, now reinforced by the 19th Infantry Brigade. But as the battle developed one thing was becoming clear—the weight of German artillery was far greater than two corps demanded. Two corps might have brought into action some three hundred pieces, but before long it was plain that there were some five or six hundred guns firing.

The British 2nd Corps throughout the afternoon was attacked by two German corps, and lost no more than its outpost line, and this at heavy cost to the enemy. The British position was not uncomfortable, except that the 3rd Division, in its difficult withdrawal from Mons, had allowed a small gap to appear between it and the 5th. Kluck, apparently surprised by the opposition to his centre and the heavy losses of his 3rd and 4th Corps, had resolved to wait till he could bring up his flanking corps for envelopment. That delay, combined with the absence of Marwitz's cavalry, due to the German ignorance of the exact position of the British army, was Sir John French's salvation, and it enabled 70,000 men and 300 guns to check and frustrate the 600 guns and the 160,000 men of the enemy.

But about 5 p.m. the British commander received a message from Joffre which put a new complexion on the affair. He learned of the fall of Namur and the defeat of Charleroi, and that he was not told of these things before shows how feeble was the liaison work between the two commands. He learned, what he had begun to suspect, that Kluck was attacking with two or three times the force originally estimated. Already the French Fifth Army on his right was a day's march to the rear. On his left there was d'Amade's Territorial divisions—the 84th at Valenciennes and west of Condé, the 82nd in difficulties about Tournai, the 81st between Lille and Dunkirk, the 88th arriving at Arras—scattered and ill-equipped troops, and the nearest some miles behind his left. He realized that, though his little army might resist for a time against such odds, a prolonged defence of the Mons position would mean that inevitably it would be cut off, enveloped, and destroyed. Already it lay alone in face of an enemy more than twice its strength. The only course was to hold on till nightfall, give his men a brief rest, and begin a fighting retreat southwards at daybreak. Like a prudent commander, he had already recon-

noitred and selected a position to be held in the first stage of retirement, should a retirement prove necessary. He issued the order to fall back—to the surprise of his army, which knew nothing of Namur and Charleroi, and was very certain that it had not been beaten. History had repeated itself almost on the same battle-ground. On the evening of June 17, 1815, when Wellington at Quatre Bras heard the news of Ligny, he said to his staff: "Blücher has had a damned good hiding, and we must go. I suppose they will say in England that we have been beaten, but that can't be helped." Sir John French "had to go" because Lanrezac and Langle and Ruffey had suffered Blücher's fate. Officers who remembered history asked themselves whether this new Ligny would be the prelude to a second Waterloo.

Joffre, at his headquarters in Champagne, awoke on the morning of Monday, the 24th, to confront a falling world. The battles of the frontier had one and all ignominiously failed. His three offensives had been met and broken, and the main armies of France hurled back inside their borders. He had used up his only general reserve. In almost every detail of war he had been outwitted by the Germans. He had to face the tragic fact that this first round had been won by the enemy, not by superior numbers, but by superior skill. Moreover, the fighting had shown the French inferior in many important details—the use of airplanes, heavy artillery, and wired entrenchments—all matters vital to a war of defence. The Germans were pouring through Lorraine against Castelnau and Dubail, already weakened by defeat, who stood precariously in front of Nancy and the Gap of Charmes. If the eastern fortress line fell, there might be a second Sedan, and who could guarantee its security after Liége, Namur, and Morhange? Great armies were flooding over the Ardennes to the Meuse, and the German right wing, far stronger than his wildest imagining, was swinging round the weak Allied left, brushing aside the feeble Territorial divisions. The northern forts had been neglected, as had those of the Falaises de Champagne, and there was no defence to bar the road to Paris. Rarely has a general been faced with a bleaker prospect. One plan only gave a faint promise of hope. The eastern front must be held at all costs, and the northern armies must by a breakneck retreat slip out of the noose. The whole battle-line of France must fall back and play for time—time to give it a better alignment—time, above all, to create laboriously and feverishly a new reserve, which could be used to restore the war of manœuvre. Wide regions of France—nay, Paris itself—

must be sacrificed, if need be, to keep intact the field strength. If reserves could not be brought up to the army, the army must fall back to the reserves.

That day, the 24th, Joffre issued his "Note to all the Armies," and the following evening his famous "General Instruction No. 2." Presently there followed a *dégringolade* of general officers, thirty-three army, corps, and divisional commanders being removed.\* In this holocaust the innocent suffered with the guilty—the far-sighted and competent Lanrezac equally with the creature of some lobby intrigue. With incomparable courage and patience, and with the mental elasticity of his race, Joffre faced the crisis, jettisoned his cherished preconceptions, and prepared a new plan on the grim facts now at last made plain. We have seen him in his weakness ; we are now to see him in his strength.

\* Two commanders of armies, seven of corps, twenty of infantry, and four of cavalry divisions (Thomasson's *Le Revers*).

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RETREAT FROM THE FRENCH FRONTIERS.

*24th August—4th September.*

Joffre's Revision of Policy—The Retirement of the French Armies—Kluck's Pursuit of the British—Battle of Le Cateau—Maunoury's New Army—End of the British Retreat.

It was the strength of Joffre in adversity that he had the courage to face the most unwelcome facts. He must break off contact with the enemy right and centre, now sweeping down more than a million strong from the north and north-east, must retreat and continue to retreat till the time came to resume the attack. When that hour would strike he could not tell; he must do the duty that lay nearest him and trust to fortune. It is clear from his "General Instruction No. 2," of 25th August, that he had not envisaged the full results of the frontier *débâcle*. He hoped for a resumption of the offensive somewhere on the Somme or the Falaises de Champagne. But this false calculation did not vitiate the soundness of his general policy. Its essentials were—first, a stand at all costs in the east by Dubail and Castelnau, holding Nancy if possible, but in any case the line Toul—Epinal—Belfort; a short retreat by the Third and Fourth Armies pivoting on Verdun; a withdrawal of the Fifth and British Armies till such time as they could be reorganized and strengthened; and the provision of two new armies as a "mass of manœuvre" to aid his left and centre in the ultimate reaction. These reserves at the moment he did not possess, and he could only obtain them by moving troops from such of the field armies as were less hotly pressed. This meant time and complicated transport, and he must have known in his heart from the outset that a stand on the Somme and the Laon hills was impossible. The question of Paris was not the least of his difficulties. On 25th August he received definite orders from his Government that if the retreat continued three active corps



must be allotted for the defence of the capital. He acquiesced, but reserved his opinion. He remembered too well the events of 1870, and was resolved to resist most stoutly the lure of fortified places, and keep his armies together as a force of manœuvre.

While his main preoccupation was with the north, the eastern line was a constant anxiety, and fortunately there came news which eased his mind. We have seen that after Morhange the First and Second Armies ranged themselves in rectangular formation across the Gap of Charmes, Castelnau from the Grand Couronné of Nancy southward to Rozelieures, and Dubail thence eastward to the line of the Vosges. There was an open space in the angle of their junction, and thither the enemy pressed after the fall of Lunéville on the 24th. Dubail brought up two corps into the angle with three divisions of Conneau's cavalry, and when on the morning of the 25th the Germans entered Rozelieures they were almost at once driven out of it. That afternoon Castelnau struck at one flank with Foch's 20th Corps, and on the other wing Dubail reached the Meurthe and Mortagne at Lamath and Blainville. The Germans could only escape by a hasty retreat, and by the 26th the French had closed the Gap of Charmes and held a line from the east side of the Grand Couronné to St. Dié in the south. It was a brilliantly conceived and perfectly executed action, a forehint of the great battle which was to open a fortnight later, and for the moment it secured the eastern front. The Imperial Crown Prince also suffered a check. Maunoury with three reserve divisions formed at the time a group in Ruffey's Third Army, and had been entrusted with the task of watching movements from Metz. On the 24th he obtained intelligence that the Crown Prince, believing that the whole Fourth Army had been disastrously engaged at Virton, had resolved forthwith to turn Ruffey's right on the Othain. On the 25th Maunoury anticipated him by driving in his left flank. Had the attack been forced home, the whole German V. Army might have been imperilled.\* But that night Maunoury and his divisions were recalled, for Joffre had urgent need of them in the north.

The retreat of the Allied armies of the right and centre was by the left, pivoting on Verdun, and for a proper understanding it is best surveyed from east to west—from the short retirement of Ruffey near the centre of the wheel to the one-hundred-and-eighty-mile march of the British at the circumference.

\* See the admissions in the German General Staff monograph, *Der Grosse Krieg in Einzeldarstellungen : Die Schlacht bei Longwy.*

We have seen that Ruffey's Third Army, having failed at Virton on the 22nd, had fallen back to the Othain, whence it presently found itself compelled to withdraw by the influence of events further down the Meuse valley. On the 26th it retired across the Meuse, and began slowly to retreat on the entrenched camp of Verdun. Its opponent, the Imperial Crown Prince, who had with him the bulk of six infantry corps and one of cavalry, had little credit by the pursuit. That day, as we have seen, Longwy fell, but the retreat was never hustled, and by the last day of the month the Third Army was in position west and south-west of Verdun, garrisoning at the same time the forts and woody hills north and east of the town. On the 30th Ruffey had been retired, presumably for Virton, and his place taken by Sarrail, the commander of the 6th Corps. The new general was comparatively young, a man of fifty-eight, a southerner who had learned his trade in African wars, able, ambitious, with a somewhat fantastic and speculative mind, but one whose martial bearing and curious blue eyes—*yeux de faïence*, as the phrase went—made a profound impression on the men he led. He succeeded to little more than the fragment of an army, for he had had to send the 42nd Division of the 6th Corps to Foch's new force, and the 4th Corps to Maunoury at Paris. His instructions from Joffre were at all costs to keep clear of the entanglement of Verdun, and if necessary to retreat to Bar-le-Duc. But he realized the value of the fortified Meuse heights, and when he took up position in the first days of September his right was still in touch with the fortress—a decision which was to mean much for the future of the campaign.

Langle's Fourth Army had a more troubled retreat, for it had further to go, and it was engaged with the IV. Army of Duke Albrecht of Würtemberg and the bulk of Hausen's Saxons. It had also to deplete itself to form Foch's new Ninth Army, surrendering its 9th and 11th Corps. On the 25th, after the failure of its Ardennes offensive, it was still east of the Meuse between Mézières and Montmédy. At the moment Langle had only Duke Albrecht to deal with, and on the 26th he vigorously repulsed a German attempt to cross the river on the very ground over which in September 1870 the Germans had marched to envelop at Sedan the doomed army of MacMahon. On the 27th came Joffre's order to retire, for Hausen was coming down the west bank. Langle obtained permission to suspend his retreat for one day, drove back Duke Albrecht with his right between Sedan and Stenay, and struck hard with his left at Hausen's

left at Launois between Signy-l'Abbaye and Novion-Porcien, where he had the assistance of the 1st Moroccan Division, soon to belong to Foch's new army. On the 29th he began his retreat in good order, falling back through Rethel. There was a gap of some twenty-five miles between him and the French Fifth Army—a space into which from the 27th onward Foch's force was gathering; but Hausen was unable to take advantage of it, for he was himself in difficulties. If the retreat of the French Fourth Army was the most perfect of the Allied movements, the advance of the III. Army was the clumsiest part of the German performance. Hausen had been too early at Charleroi, and by attacking on the Meuse prematurely had given Lanrezac warning; ever afterwards he was consistently too late. He had a gap in his army corresponding to the gap between Langle and Lanrezac, and was distracted by appeals for help from Bülow on his right and Duke Albrecht on his left, so that his unhappy force made a sidelong progress southwards, their eyes turned everywhere. Langle was never seriously troubled. On the 29th he was on the front Buzancy–Rethel; next day he was crossing the Aisne. After that, having checked the ardour of the German centre, he marched fast in accordance with Joffre's orders. Rheims and Châlons were occupied by the enemy, and in the first days of September the French Fourth Army was astride the upper Marne among the Champagne wolds, just south of Joffre's old *poste de commandement* at Vitry-le-François.

Of the three French armies of the north the Fifth had the longest way to go, and the most difficult task, for at Charleroi it had suffered a far heavier defeat than the mischances of Langle and Ruffey in the Ardennes, and from first to last it was in peril of out-flanking. Its retreat, as we have seen, began on the 23rd, and by the night of the 24th it was on the general line Maubeuge–Givet, two of its reserve divisions being actually inside the Maubeuge forts, but with orders to continue the retreat next morning; and its true left, the 18th Corps, at Solre-le-Château, twelve miles from the British right. As Sordet's cavalry corps was under orders to proceed to the British left, Lanrezac had cause to be anxious for the safety of his left wing. On the 25th he was roughly between Avesnes and Chimay, fighting Bülow's vanguards, and keeping off with his right the threat from Hausen. On the 26th, under pressure from the Saxon right, his course was directed more to the south-west, towards the upper Oise valley. On the evening of the 27th Lanrezac was across the Oise, and his four corps lay from



Guise by the south of Hirson to Rumigny. He had received Joffre's orders to attack next day towards St. Quentin, and this required a wheel by his right and centre so as to face westwards. That was clearly impossible, and the only plan was a flank march behind the Oise, which should transfer the main striking forces to the left wing. The British army was now between Noyon and La Fère, well to Lanrezac's left rear, and the plan involved an advance by Sir John French on St. Quentin from the south. But the position of the British made their co-operation impossible; and Lanrezac was obliged to put in Valabrègue's two reserve divisions as a left flank guard. On the morning of the 29th his 18th and 3rd Corps crossed the Oise between Guise and Moy, moving on St. Quentin. But about 8 a.m. the pressure of Bülow on his right centre, the 10th Corps, compelled him to give up all thought of that objective. He resolved to devote himself to punishing the German 10th, Guard, and Guard Reserve Corps now pressing east of Guise. He moved his 3rd Corps to his right, and with it and his 10th and 1st Corps inflicted upon Bülow a severe check. But his left wing, the 18th Corps, had to fall back, and Lanrezac retired from the Oise towards the Ailette and the Aisne. The check was of extreme importance, for it disengaged the British 1st Corps from Bülow's close pursuit. But the situation was still dangerous, for the front of the retreating armies was highly irregular. On the 29th, the day when Joffre resolved to retire on the Marne, while Langle was forty miles north of that river, and Lanrezac fifty, Sir John French was less than thirty. On the following day, while Lanrezac was still north of Laon, the British were fighting far to the south-west in the Clermont-Compiègne region. Yet without serious difficulty Lanrezac by the 3rd of September had crossed the Aisne and the Marne, thanks to the incompetence of Bülow and his own skill and resolution. On that day he was replaced by Franchet d'Esperey, the former commander of the 1st Corps. The new general was to prove a most wise and gallant soldier, but it is permissible to regret that Lanrezac should have suffered for blunders in which he had no share, and that his great talents should have been thus early lost to the service of his country.

We turn now to the most critical part of the retreat—the events on the Allied left. In telling the tale we must keep in mind the standpoint of the German Command, for with it was the initiative and on it lay the burden of making decisions on which were to hinge the whole fortune of the war. When the tale has been told



of its hesitations and resolves, it will be possible with greater clearness to consider the mind of the French Generalissimo and assess the value of his dispositions.

Kluck, the commander of the I. Army, the marching wing of the invasion, had, unlike most of his colleagues, no experience of staff work. A self-made man, who had risen from a comparatively humble station, he had spent all his life with troops. He had four very special difficulties to contend with. One was that he had no purchase with Great Headquarters, was apparently not fully in their confidence, and, though in command of the most vital part of the German attack, had from 17th August been placed under Bülow's orders. The second was that he had little regard for that colleague, and differed from him profoundly on strategical and tactical matters. The third was that the German Intelligence system had broken down, and, now that contact had been made with the main armies, was markedly inferior to that of the Allies.\* Finally, the German line of march was becoming dangerously long. The liaison with Great Headquarters at Luxembourg and between the different armies was precarious, and Kluck, who needed every man he could scrape together if his enveloping net was to be flung sufficiently wide, had been compelled to leave the 3rd Reserve and 9th Reserve Corps (the latter of which had just come up) to watch the Belgians at Antwerp, and the 4th Reserve as a temporary garrison of the Brussels area. Bülow, timid about his right flank, forbade the I. Army to get too far west, and Marwitz's Cavalry Corps—the mainspring of the enveloping tactics—was not under Kluck's direction. The I. Army commander, therefore, joined battle at Mons ill-informed as to his enemy's position, not very clear about his next step, and chafing under a grievance.

The fighting from Condé to Binche on the afternoon of Sunday the 23rd revealed to him the British, two corps strong. He was impressed by their stalwart resistance, but correctly assessed their numbers. His orders for the 24th were that his 4th, 9th, and

\* I take the following instances from Kluck's own narrative: He thought the French 2nd Corps was in Brussels on 9th August, when it was actually with Langle. He thought the British had disembarked at Dunkirk, Ostend, and Calais, and seems to have been of this opinion till after the Battle of the Marne. He post-dated the British disembarkment in France by two days. He was surprised by the British appearance on the Condé Canal on the 23rd, believing the whole country to be clear for 50 miles. He was completely at sea about the British alignment at Le Cateau, thinking it to be north and south, instead of east and west. His main blunder was, of course, as to the size and position of Maunoury's army. It has been generally admitted in Germany that the Intelligence department, under Major Nikolai, was one of their feeblest services.

3rd Corps should drive Sir John French into Maubeuge, while his right wing, the 2nd and the 4th Reserve Corps (the latter now coming up), should march rapidly on the west side to cut off the enemy from his presumed base. There was trouble with Bülow over Marwitz's cavalry, which Kluck wished to advance towards Denain to support the enveloping movement, and after valuable time had been lost he obtained his wish by an appeal to the Supreme Command, and Marwitz passed under his orders. The movement did not proceed according to plan, for the envelopers were late, and the German centre, heavily punished the day before, advanced with extreme caution. Smith-Dorrien's 2nd Corps, with the 19th Brigade and Allenby's cavalry on its left, having fallen back from the canal five miles to the southward, held a line from the mining village of Frameries to the cornfields west of Audregnies and beat off the attack of the German 3rd and 4th Corps. When the right of the British 5th Division seemed in danger of being turned, the 2nd Cavalry Brigade was sent to its aid. At 7 a.m., Smith-Dorrien, being outnumbered by something like four to one, began his retirement. Haig's 1st Corps had already slipped away, and early in the afternoon the whole British force, intact and in good heart, was assembled on the Maubeuge position. Haig held the ground from Maubeuge to the little town of Bavai; thence Smith-Dorrien prolonged the line westward to the village of Bry, with the 19th Brigade on his flank between Bry and Jenlain. The forts of Maubeuge made the British right relatively safe, and, since the worst danger was on the left, Allenby's cavalry were sent to the rear of Jenlain. Further west, Kluck had been more fortunate. Tournai, which was held only by a brigade of French Territorials, was taken, and the 2nd German Corps drove the 84th French Territorial Division out of Valenciennes, while German cavalry occupied Douai. Lille, too, was abandoned by General Percin on instructions from the Government at Paris.\*

Sir John French avoided the trap prepared for him. Already the Germans were well south of both his flanks, and any delay would mean that he would find himself shut up in Maubeuge, with the fate of Bazaine in store for him. He decided to halt, for the night but no longer, on the Jenlain-Maubeuge position. Next day the place was invested, the 7th Reserve Corps from Bülow's II. Army being deputed for the task. The old Vauban stronghold

\* For this curious tale, which in the early days of the war developed into a posterous legend, see General Percin's *Lille*.

had had a chequered history in late years, having been treated only as a place of arrest and support, and not as a fortress. But it occupied a position of great strategical importance as the junction of several vital railway lines, and on the outbreak of war large numbers of troops were set to entrenching the ground between the forts. General Fournier with his garrison of 30,000 held out till the 7th of September, enduring not less than eight days' bombardment by the Namur siege train, and thereby seriously confused the German communications and kept one of their corps away from the Battle of the Marne. His performance, strangely misrepresented at the time, was not the least of the services rendered by the generals of France. Alone of the northern fortresses Maubeuge played a vital part in the campaign.\*

On the 25th Sir John French's aim was to put the forest of Mormal behind him. This woodland, ten miles long from north to south and six miles wide, was rough and tangled with undergrowth, and was believed—wrongly—to have no roads fit for an army to travel. It lay directly between him and the Sambre, and must clearly be passed on the east or the west. But the roads on the east side were too few and too bad for his whole army to travel; while if he moved by the west side only he would leave a desperate gap between himself and Lanrezac, and moreover would thrust his left wing into the jaws of Kluck's enveloping force. Accordingly he decided to send Haig by the east roads to Maroilles and Landrecies, while Smith-Dorrien kept the west side in the direction of Le Cateau. It was perhaps the only solution of the problem, but it was a solution with its own risks, for a gap of some ten miles separated the two corps on the march. The intention was that the inner wings should get into touch as soon as they were south of the forest.

Kluck that day seemed to have the cards in his hand, but he failed to play them. The excuse which he has given was the absence of Marwitz's cavalry, which had only come under his command on the evening of the 24th, and was consequently too late to get behind the British left flank. He directed his 2nd Corps from Denain on Bouchain and Avesnes-le-Sec; Marwitz, who had been aimlessly galloping towards the sunset, through Denain in the same direction; half of the 4th Corps on the main road from Valenciennes to Solesmes, the other half by the west side of Mormal on Landrecies; the 3rd Corps through the forest

\* See Paul Cassou, *La Vérité sur le Siège de Maubeuge*. A most unnecessary inquiry was held after the war, and Fournier was honourably acquitted of any blame.

towards Maroilles; and the 9th Corps from Bavai by the east side. The 4th Reserve Corps followed the centre in general reserve. He was slow in starting, partly because of his troubles with the cavalry, partly because he had to make arrangements to watch Maubeuge, and largely because some time was needed to reorganize his troops after the hard work of the previous days.

Tuesday the 25th was a summer's day of intense and glaring heat, and the weary British army found the long march in the dust a trying business. Haig started late and had little trouble on the eastern roads, but it was dusk before the van of the 1st Division reached Maroilles and the 2nd Division the neighbourhood of Landrecies. It had been Sir John French's intention to bring Haig's left more to the west, but the hour was too far advanced and the troops were too exhausted for further movement. It was a dark night with a cloudy sky and a drizzle of rain, which presently changed to a downpour. The advance guards of the German 3rd Corps, which had advanced straight through the forest, and so escaped detection by the British airplanes, came into action between 9.30 and 10 p.m. against the 1st Division at Maroilles, and the Guards Brigade of the 2nd Division at Landrecies. The latter assault was gallantly beaten off, and with the assistance of two reserve divisions of the French Fifth Army the situation at Maroilles was saved. When the last shots had died away the men of the 1st Corps lay down where they stood to snatch a brief rest. They were very exhausted, and it was decided that next day they should continue their movement southward, while Smith-Dorrien and Allenby should follow the retirement and hold back the pursuit.

But Smith-Dorrien was in worse case. That day he had had no easy march, and his 3rd Division had held and beaten off at Solesmes an attack by Marwitz's horse and part of the infantry of the 4th Corps. Allenby, too, had been in action south-east of Valenciennes. By dusk, however, Smith-Dorrien had reached a position on the left bank of the Selle west of the town of Le Cateau. There he found part of the 4th Division under General Snow, which had detrained at Le Cateau and had already entrenched on the ground. The dispositions that night were, from right to left, the 5th Division through Reumont and Troisvilles, the 3rd Division through Caudry, and the 4th Division about Beauvois and Haucourt. Half of Allenby's cavalry was on the right, attempting to fill the gap between the 2nd and 1st Corps. The 19th Brigade was in support to the 5th Division. On the



British left was Sordet's Cavalry Corps, and beyond it various detachments of d'Amade's Territorials.\*

Smith-Dorrien in the small hours of the morning of the 26th had to decide whether he dared to retreat then and there, or must first stand and fight. He had apparently received no explicit orders from Sir John French to retire at once, though he was given the general direction of retirement as the line Ribemont-St. Quentin-Vermand, thirty-five miles away. Clearly instructions as to so distant an objective could not be interpreted by any commander as the immediate orders for his day's work. Smith-Dorrien may well have assumed that the details and the method of retirement were left to his discretion. About 1.30 a.m., having received a cavalry report which warned him of the great strength of Kluck, he learned from Allenby that if a battle was to be avoided the retreat must be begun before daybreak, but that the scattered cavalry could not be got together in time to cover it. Even then he cannot have known of the full weight of the I. Army : he cannot have known, for example, of the 4th Reserve Corps, now marching against his left centre. But he knew other things : that his 2nd Corps were very weary, having had much the hardest of the marching and fighting since noon on the 23rd ; that the 4th Division would not be complete for some hours ; that his right, owing to the seven-mile gap between him and Haig, was in the air ; he learned, too, from its commander that the 3rd Division, owing to the action at Solesmes, would not be in a position to march till 9 a.m. Presently he realized that battle was already joined. At or just before dawn the advanced guard of the German 3rd Corps was in Le Cateau, and the 4th Corps was attacking his centre at Caudry. In these circumstances it seemed impossible to begin his retreat till he had checked the enemy ; and he believed himself competent to do so, remembering the various occasions in the past few days when he had struck back at and crippled the pursuit. Looked at in any way it was a prodigious gamble, but the hazard of retreating from such a position may well have seemed greater than that of fighting in it. Sir John French praised the decision in his original dispatch, but afterwards recanted his praise and blamed it severely as a disobedience to orders. This it can scarcely have been ; and any ill effect which it may have had on the subsequent retreat is not the point at

\* They were the 84th Territorial Division, now retiring through Cambrai, and further west the 61st and 62nd Reserve Divisions, which had come up from Arras and Bapaume.

issue. The question is whether Smith-Dorrien had any choice: whether in the position in which he found himself at dawn on the 26th he could possibly have retired straightway without utter disaster. The commander of the 2nd Corps was a soldier of proven sagacity and of a temperament not easily excited or nonplussed. If he thought it imperative to stand and fight, we may well accept the necessity.\*

The rain of the night had ceased, and a fine summer morning dawned. Bright sunlight, a pale blue sky, and the thin mists rising from the wet fields gave promise of a sultry day. As the sun rose, the flashes of the German guns tore through the haze, and the first light showed the grey masses of the enemy's infantry pushing forward in dense firing lines. Against Smith-Dorrien's 55,000 Kluck opposed not less than 140,000 men. He was surprised to find the British in position, and hoped at last to have that decisive battle which he had hitherto missed. His tactics were the same as at Mons—a frontal attack mainly by artillery, to be followed by an envelopment on both flanks. But the orders for the day, issued the night before, had not contemplated a pitched battle, and it took some time to revise them. The 4th and 4th Reserve Corps were to attack the front, the 3rd Corps and Marwitz's cavalry to envelop the British right, and more cavalry and the 2nd Corps to work round the British left and move on Cambrai. At first the British 4th Division, not having its guns up, fell back a little, but presently by its rifle fire it brought the enemy cavalry to a standstill. This, however, was no more than the prologue, and the battle proper began about 7 a.m. with a terrific German bombardment by the artillery of the 4th Corps, gradually reinforced by that of the 3rd and of the 4th Reserve. The ridge which Smith-Dorrien held was studded with villages, the church spires of which gave good targets for the enemy gunners. The British had had little time to entrench their position, though along the front line shelter trenches had been hastily dug and afforded some small cover. Their artillery, though outnumbered by nearly

\* The reader will find Lord French's case stated in his *1914*, pp. 74-80. This work, which should be of the highest authority, contains unfortunately so many inaccuracies that it must be used with extreme caution. The dispute, it is obvious, can never be finally settled, for some of the factors are hypothetical. Put shortly, it resolves itself into the question whether Smith-Dorrien at an early hour on the 26th was engaged only with Kluck's covering troops and cavalry or with his main infantry. If the first, he fell into Kluck's trap and fought an unnecessary battle. On the evidence before me I think the second alternative is the true one, and that from just after dawn the British were engaged with the main troops of the 4th Corps and Marwitz's cavalry.

four to one, made a brilliant stand, and for seven hours checked the enemy's infantry rushes. The two points of serious danger were the right wing near Le Cateau, where the Germans managed to work round the flank of the sorely tried 5th Division, and at Caudry, which formed an acute salient, garrisoned by the brigade of the 3rd Division which had been fighting the night before at Solesmes. Nevertheless at 1 p.m. the British front was still intact, and Sordet and Allenby and d'Amade's reserves had for the moment checked the enveloping movements.

About 1 p.m. Smith-Dorrien realized that it was time to leave. His right flank was getting hourly more exposed by Haig's withdrawal, and Kluck's 9th Corps would presently be arriving. He had persuaded the enemy that he was not to be trifled with, and had beaten off his chief corps with heavy losses. If he was to get away, he must issue the orders forthwith, for to break off a battle with a vastly superior opponent is one of the most difficult of the operations of war. The attack of the 3rd Corps about noon broke the 5th Division on the right and precipitated the retreat. Orders could not reach many of the units, who remained in the trenches and so protected the retirement of the rest, but under cover of the devoted artillery most of the infantry quietly withdrew from the field. The batteries left behind had been so knocked to pieces that it was impossible to move them. Before the sun set the 2nd Corps was tramping over the belt of low upland in which the streams of Scheldt and Sambre take their rise, and on the morning of the 27th it halted north of St. Quentin where the land begins to fall to the bright valley of the Oise. The chief miracle of the retreat had been effected.

Le Cateau was Kluck's most conspicuous and most indefensible failure. Had he pressed hard with his 3rd Corps at the moment when the 5th Division was falling back, or had he sent in a fresh cavalry division on the flank of the pursuit before evening, it is hard to see how the 2nd Corps could have escaped. But he handled his cavalry throughout with singular *maladroitness*, and his rigid devotion to envelopment, tactical as well as strategic, meant that he dissipated his striking force at the vital points. As for Smith-Dorrien, he had achieved the patently impossible at the expense of some 8,000 casualties and the loss of thirty-six guns. Who shall say how much that heroic stand did to disarrange the German plan, or to enable the British to win clear of the pincers and re-form for the counter-attack? By one of those strange coincidences which delight the historian the battle was fought at the

very place where, in 1712, the British troops in bitter shame withdrew from their allies, when Ormonde took the place of Marlborough. On the general himself the best comment is to be found in the earlier and juster judgment of Sir John French. "I say without hesitation that the saving of the left wing of the army under my command on the morning of the 26th August could never have been accomplished unless a commander of rare and unusual coolness, intrepidity, and determination had been present to conduct personally the operation."

Kluck had suffered heavily, and the orders issued for the 27th directed a start at 5 a.m., a late hour for an army of pursuit. Being under the impression that the British base was Calais and that Sir John French was trying to retreat thither, he once again dispatched Marwitz's cavalry on a wild goose chase to the west, where it was faithfully dealt with by Sordet. His force was moving south-westward while Bülow was marching south, and the result was that Haig's retreat on the 26th was unmolested. On the 27th it was Bülow's right which was in contact with the British 1st Corps. On the 28th the two halves of the British force had been reunited, and that evening the 1st Corps lay south of La Fère between the St. Gobain forest and the Oise, while the 2nd Corps was north of the river about Noyon.

Meantime the centre of gravity had shifted further west. On the night of the 25th Maunoury was ordered to leave Ruffey's Third Army and repair to Montdidier to collect and command the new Sixth Army. He was a man of sixty-seven, a distinguished artillery officer who had held the posts of commandant of the *École de Guerre* and Governor of Paris. His troops could only come into line by degrees, for some of them had long journeys to make, and this fact presently convinced Joffre that a general counter-attack from the Somme and the Falaises de Champagne was impossible. According to the original plan of de Rivières, if the frontier defences were forced, a stand could be made on the heights of Champagne, the escarpment which extends in a long curve from the Oise eastwards by Laon to Rheims. But the forts of the Falaises had been permitted to decline, the retreating armies were in no condition yet awhile to turn, and the two new armies, the Ninth and the Sixth, were only in their assembly stage.

At this moment the German Supreme Command was in a state of elation and confidence. Two-thirds of the great march were over, and the Allies, everywhere beaten, seemed to be fleeing before them. The



fight at Le Cateau, indecisive as it was, seems to have convinced Kluck that the British army was out of action. On the 27th he had been made independent of Bülow, and at once began to press his views on Great Headquarters. Paris was now the pre-occupation of the Supreme Command far away in Luxembourg, and the news from Kluck, and the optimistic reports pouring in from the other armies, decided their policy. On the evening of the 28th they issued orders that the I. Army should march west of the Oise towards the lower Seine, while the II. Army should take the line Laon-La Fère towards Paris. This meant that the capital would be isolated between two German forces. Kluck did not agree. Hitherto he had been thinking mainly of cutting off the British from the coast, and, now that they were banished from his mind as a broken remnant, he was anxious to find the left flank of the French, roll it up, and force it away from Paris. On the 28th he was crossing the Somme, and on the 29th his right had a stubborn fight between Villers-Bretonneux and Proyart. It was his first taste of Maunoury, who had taken over from d'Amade on the 27th; but he was not perturbed by it, regarding it as only the last sputter of resistance from the oddments of French Territorials and reserve divisions in the west with which he had been in touch for four days. In his memoirs he has complained that he was not kept informed by Great Headquarters of the general situation, and in particular of the dispatch of corps to Russia. But had he had this news, it would only have strengthened his main contention, that the I. and II. Armies should close in and attack the French left. On the 29th came Lanrezac's counterstroke at Guise, when the commander of the II. Army was compelled to ask Kluck for help, and this seems to have converted Bülow to his colleague's view. That night it was agreed that the order for the south-westerly move should be disregarded and that the I. Army should advance south through Noyon and Compiègne and close up on the II. The decision was at once accepted by Great Headquarters, who seem at the time to have had the most imperfect knowledge of what was happening and but a feeble control over the Army Commanders. The step was obviously wise. The German line was already strung out to its extreme capacity, and was beginning to show gaps. Had its right been stretched to the lower Seine it would have courted calamity.

The 29th was also an important day for the British army. Sir John French was able to give it a brief rest. The day before

he had heard for the first time of the formation of Maunoury's force, for the liaison between the Allies was little better than that of the enemy. On the 29th he met Joffre, who, in spite of the success that day at Guise, told him that he had relinquished his intention of standing on the line Rheims-Amiens and had resolved to fall back behind the Marne. This was also Sir John French's view, but, in assenting to it, he added the warning that his army was totally unfit for further fighting till it had been refitted and reinforced. To this the French Generalissimo agreed, and undertook that the French Fifth and Sixth Armies should close in so as to screen the British retreat. The record of the interview is not free from contradictions. At one moment the British Commander-in-Chief seems to be protesting against retirement, and at another to be explaining the impossibility of keeping his army in the line. He was in a position of undoubted difficulty, for he was moving his sea base from Havre to the Atlantic coast at St. Nazaire. Next day he met his corps commanders, when, according to his account, Smith-Dorrien urged retreat to the coast and re-embarkation. Sir John French was mistaken; no such counsel, the folly of which equalled the disloyalty, was given. But that day we find the British commander informing Lord Kitchener that he had decided to retire "behind the Seine in a south-westerly direction west of Paris." Joffre had proposed a general retirement, but this looked very like the British withdrawing altogether from the Allied line. The ominous message, followed by others in the same tone of despair, brought Kitchener across the Channel, who conveyed to Sir John the instructions of the British Government that an independent command must not be construed so as to involve a failure in duty to the armies of France. So ended a foolish and unpleasant incident, in which it is charitable to believe that Sir John French did not mean what he said. The situation was in the highest degree perplexing; he had not been kept fully informed by the French Command, he had had friction with Lanrezac, he believed that he had had to bear the brunt of the fighting without proper support, he had anxieties about his communications which no French army shared, and he had, not unnaturally in the circumstances, lost faith in the French Staff and the French Command. If there was dire confusion throughout the retirement among the fighting troops, it is unreasonable to expect perfect balance and clarity in the commanding officer.\*

\* The British War Office had some cause for anxiety during these days. A day or two after Mons they received an urgent request from G.H.Q. for maps as far as

The immense significance of the decisions of the 29th and 30th must be left to be discussed in a later chapter. Here we may summarize the last stage of the retirement. Kluck, who should have been in echelon behind Bülow's right, easily outstripped his neighbour, and on 2nd September the I. Army was crossing the Marne when the II. was crossing the Aisne. Maunoury, finding the pressure of Kluck's right inimical to the concentration of his army, fell back through St. Just and Creil on the northern defences of Paris. The British were over the Aisne on the 31st, and felt again the pressure of Kluck's new wheel, in actions in the woods of Compiègne and Villers-Cotterets. On 3rd September they crossed the Marne, and the long retreat from the Belgian frontier approached its end.

The last days had been hard and critical, the afternoons a blaze of heat, the nights chilly and often wet. There was no rest, for each day's march was continued late, and the incessant retirement might well have broken the spirit of the best of troops. But the men went through it all with fortitude, even with gaiety, and their only anxiety was to know when they would at last be allowed to stand and take order with the enemy. To realize the full achievement of the British force, which in the retreat had the most laborious task, we must remember the temperament of the soldier. He was entering on a war against what public opinion agreed was the most formidable army in the world. Partly, it is true, the legend of German invincibility had been weakened by the stand of Belgium; but, as our soldiers understood that tale, it had been fortress work rather than battles in the field. In such a campaign initial success, however small, works wonders with the spirit of an army. But there had been no success. The men had gone straight from the train, or from a long march, into action, and almost every hour of every day they had been retreating. Often they were given the chance of measuring themselves in close combat against their adversaries, and on these occasions they held their own; but still the retreat went on, and it was difficult to avoid the feeling that, even if their own battalion had stood fast, there must have been a defeat elsewhere in the line to explain this endless retirement. Such conditions are trying to a soldier's nerves. The man who will support cheerfully any fatigue in

the Seine and Marne; a day or two later for maps as far back as Orleans, then for the Loire area, and finally for maps reaching back to Bordeaux. They may well have wondered if panic had not fallen on the Allied front.—Sir C. E. Callwell's *Experiences of a Dug-Out* (1920).

a forward march will wilt and slacken when he is going backward. Remember, too, that, except for a few members of the Headquarters Staff, the officers and men knew nothing of the general situation. Had they learned of Namur and Charleroi it would have explained much, but few of them heard of it till a week later. They fell back in complete uncertainty as to what was happening, and could only suspect that the Germans were winning because they were the better army. Under such circumstances to have preserved complete discipline and faithfulness, nay, even to have retained humour and gaiety and unquenchable spirits, was an achievement more remarkable than the most signal victory.

Not less splendid was the performance of the French. Indeed, in many ways they had the more difficult duty. Though they were less constantly harassed than our men in their retreat, they had begun by a more nerve-shaking experience. Mons was not worse than a drawn battle; but Charleroi, Dinant, and Virton were unequivocal defeats. Further, for the French soldier defence must be in itself aggressive. To yield mile after mile was for the French troops of the line, and not less for corps like the Zouaves and Turcos, an almost intolerable discipline. That it was done without grave disaster, and that, after so great a damping of zeal, the fire of attack could be readily rekindled, was an immense tribute to the armies of the Republic. The nation had always been famous for *élan* and drive; they showed now that their temper was as good when their business was the anvil rather than the hammer.





For the British troops the ten days of the retreat had been like a moving picture seen through a haze of weariness and confusion. Blazing days among the coal heaps and grimy villages of Hainault; which reminded our north-countrymen of Lancashire and Durham; nights of aching travel on upland roads through the fields of beet and grain; dawns that broke over slow streams and grassy valleys upon eyes blind with lack of sleep; the cool beech woods of Compiègne; the orchards of Ourcq and Marne, now heavy with plum and cherry. And hour after hour the rattle of musketry and the roaring swell of the great shells, the hurried entrenchments and the long, deadly vigils, or the sudden happy chance of a blow back, when the bayonet took revenge for dusty miles and crippled bodies and lost comrades. On the evening of the 4th the van of the retreat saw from the slopes above the Grand Morin a land of coppice and pasture rolling southward to a broad valley, and far off the



NORTH SEA

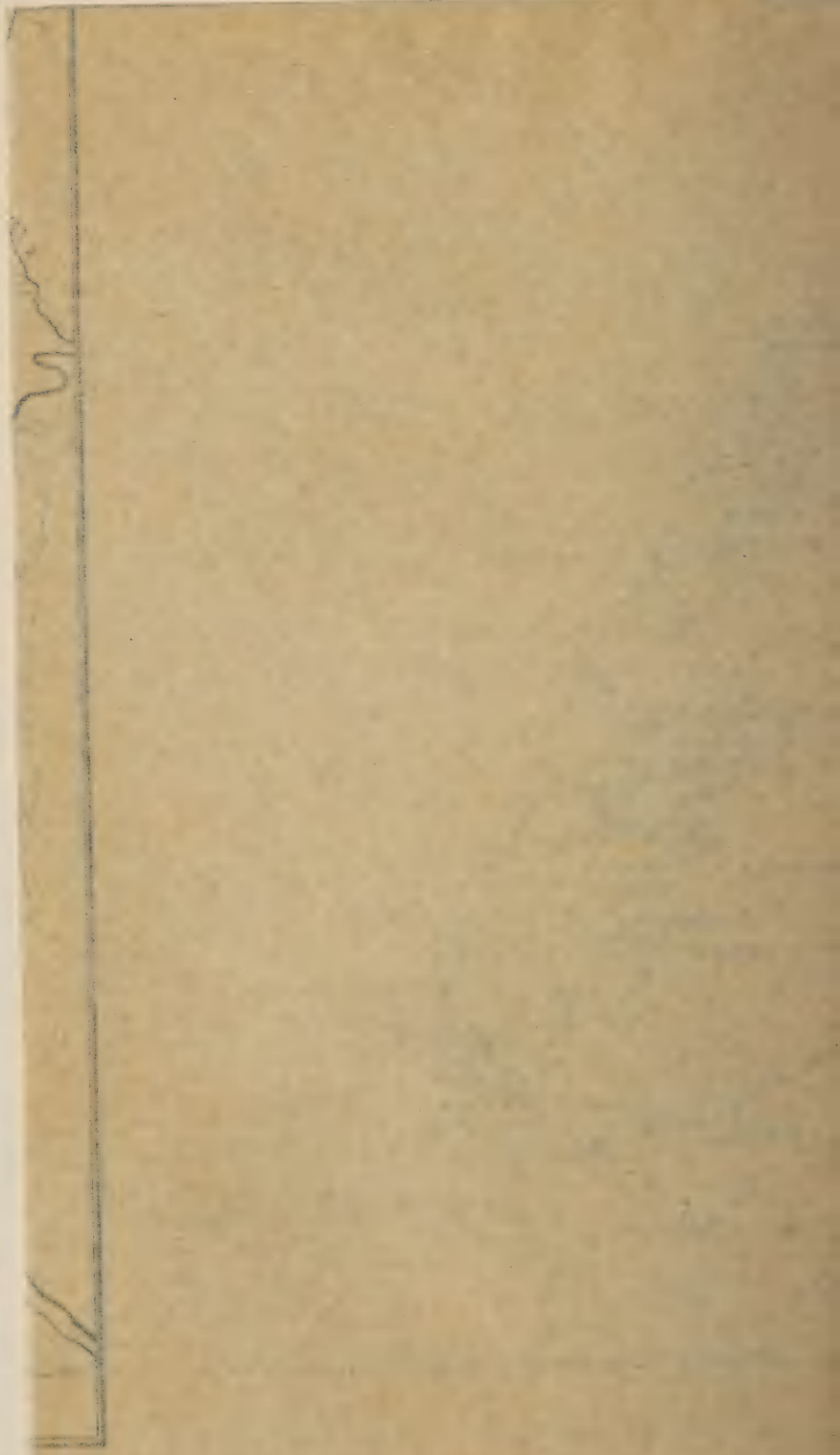
# WESTERN THEATRE OF WAR

SHOWING ALLIED AND GERMAN DISPOSITIONS AND GERMAN ADVANCE INTO FRANCE UP TO THE EVE OF THE MARNE.

Allies ..... shown thus   
 Germans ..... shown thus   
 Zones covered by Advance of German Armies   
 Land over 750 feet 

Scale. 0 5 10 20 30 40 50 MILES





dusk of many trees. It was the forest of Fontainebleau and the vale of the Seine. The Allies had fallen back behind all but one of the four rivers which from north and east open the way to Paris. That night they were encamped along the very streams towards which a hundred years before Napoleon had retired before Schwarzenberg and Blücher.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE EASTERN THEATRE OF WAR.

*5th August—10th September.*

Russia's Strategic Position—Rennenkampf's Advance in East Prussia—Battle of Tannenberg—The Austrian Offensive—Battles of Lemberg and Rava Russka—Serbia's Stand—The Russian Proclamation to Poland.

At this moment begins the reaction upon the West of events on the Russian front. Already news had reached Great Headquarters in Luxembourg which compelled them to reconsider their first plans and prepare to send reinforcements eastward. It is necessary to leave the German armies in France, now approaching their hour of crisis, and consider the position of that battle ground where Germany stood, to begin with, on the defence.

The configuration of Russia, as has been already pointed out, made invasion in the ordinary sense a hopeless task. The strongest army would be apt to melt away before it reached Moscow or Petrograd. But with the Russian field forces stationed in Western Poland an opportunity was given to Germany and Austria of striking a blow without the handicap of insuperable natural obstacles. A glance at the map will show that Russian Poland projects into the territory of the Teutonic League in a great salient, which is roughly 200 miles from north to south and 250 from east to west. This land is a monotonous wind-swept plain, through which from south to north flows the river Vistula. About the centre stood the capital, Warsaw, reputed one of the strongest citadels in Europe, and around Warsaw lay the group of fortresses called the Polish Triangle. The southern apex was Ivan-gorod, on the Vistula; the eastern, Brest Litovsk; the northern, Warsaw itself; while to the north-west lay the advanced fort of Novo Georgievsk. This triangle was a fortified region with three fronts—two towards Germany, and one towards Austria; and the various fortresses were fully linked up with railways.



The southern frontier of Russian Poland was purely artificial, for there was no continuous barrier till from fifty to one hundred miles south of it, where the range of the Carpathians protects the plains of Hungary against attacks from the north. Galicia is simply a flattened terrace at the base of this range, watered by the upper Vistula and its tributaries, the Wisloka, the San, and the upper streams of the Bug. But in the north of Russian Poland, between the river Narev and the sea, is a country where campaigning is difficult. It is mainly swampy forest, but as it nears the Baltic coast it becomes a chain of lakes and ponds with woodland of birch and pine between them. On the very edge of the sea, along the river Pregel and the large lagoon called the Frisches Haff, there is a belt of firmer land which of old was the main highway between Prussia and Muscovy. This was the German province of East Prussia, a district unfriendly to the invader, as Napoleon found in his campaign of Friedland and Eylau. East of the Polish salient, and dividing it from Russia proper, lies a curious piece of country around the river Pripet. It is a vast tangle of streams, ponds, and marshes, covering some 30,000 square miles, and is called the Marshes of Pinsk, from the chief town of the neighbourhood. This district barred the march of armies, and a way must be taken to the north or south. On the north the road lay along the valleys of the Narev and the Niemen, where was a chain of fortified crossings. South, on the side towards Galicia, there were the three fortified towns of Lutsk, Dubno, and Rovno.

The salient of Russian Poland was, therefore, defended on its western side by the Polish Triangle, on the north by the chain of forts along the Narev and Niemen, on the south by the forts south of Pinsk, and on the east by the great marshes of the Pripet. Its communications with Russia passed north and south of these marshes. Only on the Galician side and the front towards Posen did the nature of the land offer facilities for offensive campaigning. The German frontier defences consisted of the Silesian fortresses of Breslau and Glogau, guarding the line of the Oder; the strong city of Posen on the Warta, opposite the point of the Russian salient; and a powerful line of forts on the lower Vistula, guarding the road from East to West Prussia. Thorn on the Vistula, and Danzig at its mouth, held the river valley; while Graudenz, much strengthened of late years, formed a link between them. Dirschau and Marienburg guarded the road and railway crossings of the Vistula delta. The northern entrance to the Frisches Haff lagoon was guarded by Pillau, and at its eastern end, at the mouth of the Pregel,

stood Königsberg, the second strongest of German fortresses, barring the coast road and railway to Russia. In Galicia the true Austrian line of defence was the Carpathians, but north of it were the fortified city of Cracow, the old capital of Poland, and the great entrenched camp of Przemysl.

It is important to grasp the configuration of this frontier district, for it determined the initial strategy of the campaign. Russia was bound to assume the offensive, in order to relieve her allies who were bearing the brunt of the German onslaught in the West. Her natural line of attack was through Posen, for that angle of her frontier was only 180 miles from Berlin. There was another reason: the salient of Poland went racially much farther west than the Warta, and included the bulk of the province of Posen and a considerable part of West Prussia. Germany had never been successful with her resident aliens, and she had been peculiarly unsuccessful with her Poles, all her schemes of Prussianization and land settlement having ended in something very like a fiasco. In moving westwards by the Posen route, Russia would be moving among a race who, in spite of all they had suffered from the Empire of the Tsars, still preferred a Slav to a Teuton. But this direct western advance obviously could not be made until its flanks had been safeguarded by the conquest of East Prussia and Galicia—until the Russian armies, that is to say, could be deployed safely on a front which we may define by the lower Vistula, the Warta, and the upper Oder. Russia's first task, therefore, was to defeat the Germans in East Prussia and the Austrians in Galicia, and so find a straight line of deployment for her main advance. Her centre, till her long mobilization was completed, must be her weakest point, and the Polish fortresses had not been kept at a strength which would allow her to trust in them. She could not concentrate on her Posen frontier, scarcely even on the Vistula; the Bug was the nearest line up to which she might hope to clear her flanks. These flanks were not less important to the Teutonic League. Austria, alone of the two allies able to put great forces into the field at once, lay not west but south-west, while Germany had long realized that Warsaw would most readily fall to an attack by flank and rear. For both combatants, and for purposes of both offence and defence, the vital areas were East Prussia and Galicia, and the snout of western Poland might for the moment be disregarded.

The mobilization of Russia, slow as it inevitably was, was speedier than the Germans had calculated. It took weeks to

muster her full strength, but in a few days she had ready a striking force. She had to prepare two army groups for immediate action—one on the Galician border to meet the Austrian attack, and one to take the offensive in East Prussia, where it would be opposed by a single German army, the VIII., under von Prittwitz. The East Prussian invasion was intended ultimately to prepare the way for the main advance towards Posen, but it was hurried on with the object of relieving the pressure on France; for Russia interpreted most strictly and chivalrously her duty towards her allies. Consequently it must be made, like Emmich's attack on Liége, by improvised forces. As Commander-in-Chief of all her armies the uncle of the Tsar was appointed—the Grand Duke Nicholas, a tall, silent prince, simple and straightforward in character and wholly devoted to his profession. As commander of the Petrograd area he had done more than any living man for the remaking of the army. His Chief of Staff was that General Januschkevitch whom we have already met. The commander of the South-Western group, facing Austria, was Ivanov, a modest, laborious soldier who had won fame in Manchuria by his leadership of the 3rd Siberian Corps. His Chief of Staff was Alexeiev, by general consent the ablest of Russia's military minds. Of the North-Western group the commander was Gilinski, a mediocrity who owed his place to the friendship of Sukhomlinov, the Minister of War.

Our first concern is with the North-Western group, the lesser of the two in importance; for the Russian strategy contemplated a main effort against Austria, and a concentration against Germany only when the Dual Monarchy should have been put out of action—an exact parallel to the strategy of Berlin. It consisted of two armies—the First, moving west into East Prussia from the Niemen; the Second, moving north from the Narev. A reserve army, the Tenth, was being assembled in their rear. The First was under Rennenkampf, a man of German ancestry, and one of the few Russian soldiers who had emerged from the Manchurian campaign with an enhanced reputation. He had a name for audacity and speed, and was eager to take advantage of the unreadiness of Germany on her eastern borders, in spite of the fact that the organization of the four infantry corps and five cavalry divisions of his command was very far from being complete. Samsonov, the commander of the Second Army, was of a different type. He had done well in Manchuria as a cavalryman, but he had never been regarded as brilliant; his assets were his simple kindness of character and the devotion of his men. His force was a little larger than



Rennenkampf's—five infantry corps and a mass of cavalry. The German troops in East Prussia were thus greatly outnumbered. They consisted of four corps—the 1st, 1st Reserve, 17th, and 20th—and one division of cavalry. The way seemed plain for a converging movement by Rennenkampf and Samsonov which would drive the enemy behind the Vistula, provided that close touch was kept between the two Russian armies, for the terrain was exceptionally blind and difficult. The dangers lay in the nature of the countryside, the incapacity of the group commander Gilinski to provide central direction, and the inevitable weakness of staff and intelligence work in armies so hastily assembled.

At first Rennenkampf moved fast. After some skirmishing by cavalry and covering troops he crossed the border at Suwalki on 6th August, marching in a north-westerly direction; while Samsonov on the 5th advanced on both sides of the railway from Mława by Soldau to Allenstein. The town of Insterburg stands at the confluence of the rivers Inster and Pregel, and at the junction of the railways that run east from Königsberg and south from Tilsit. It was the most important strategic position in that neighbourhood, and to cover it Prittwitz made his first stand at Gumbinnen, a town on the railway some ten miles due east. It is a country of great woods of pine, interspersed with fields of rye, and thousands of trees were felled by the Germans to make abattis. On Sunday, 16th August, Rennenkampf came in touch with the enemy, and after severe fighting carried the place. On the 19th and 20th the battle was renewed, the German left was threatened with envelopment, Insterburg was occupied by the Russians, and Prittwitz fell back upon Königsberg, though, as at Gravelotte, the defeated army took a considerable number of prisoners. The retreat was hasty, the roads being strewn with abandoned material. Meantime Samsonov's vanguard had driven in the frontier guards and roughly handled a detachment of the German 20th Corps that attempted to hold Soldau against them.

These victories gave the Russians for the moment the mastery of East Prussia, the sacred land of the German squirearchy. Rennenkampf occupied Tilsit, where Napoleon and Alexander of Russia once signed a treaty for the partition of the world. Königsberg was directly threatened, and advanced cavalry moved in the direction of Danzig. On the 27th a fête was held in Petrógrad, and by the sale of flags £20,000 was raised, which sum was to be given to the first Russian soldier who entered Berlin. The



opening round of the fight in the East had left Russia an apparent victor.

But it was only the opening round, and the *peripeteia* was to be more sudden and dramatic than the success. The result of Gumbinnen and Soldau was to create something like consternation in Berlin. On Tuesday, 25th August, the day when the British forces in the West were struggling out of the trap at Maubeuge, the high-water mark of the Russian invasion of East Prussia was reached. Russian cavalry had penetrated far to the west, driving before them crowds of fugitives. Some of the villages were burned—often by accident, for the wooden huts were like tinder in that dry August weather. In the towns which they occupied the troops of the Tsar behaved with decorum and discretion. But the terror of their name was on the peasantry of East Prussia, who remembered wild tales of the ragged spearmen who had ridden through their land a hundred years ago and made little distinction between German allies and French opponents. With stories of universal burnings and slaughters the peasants and gentry alike fled over the Vistula, and brought to Berlin the news that East Prussia was in the grip of the enemy. The reconquest of the country was necessary to the Germans for strategical reasons, for without it any advance from Posen would be caught on the flank. But apart from such considerations, the Emperor had a personal motive in undertaking the work of deliverance. The province was one of the oldest lands of the Prussian monarchy. Königsberg had been the capital of the dukes of Prussia in the days when Berlin was an unknown fishing village among the swamps of the Spree. During every year of his reign the Emperor had spent some weeks in East Prussia, and his hunting lodge amid its forests was now in Russian hands. The invasion and overrunning of the province was to him a personal insult, only less intolerable than a descent upon the capital itself. He therefore directed the concentration of a relieving force behind the Vistula, and he was fortunate enough to find a competent commander.

Before the outbreak of war there was living in retirement at Hanover a certain Paul von Hindenburg, who knew something of East Prussia, for he had commanded corps at Königsberg and Allenstein. He was a veteran of the war of 1870, and later had been associated on the General Staff with Verdy du Vernois. He had a reputation as a resolute leader of men, and he had made something of a speciality of Germany's north-eastern frontier. Though nearer seventy than sixty, he was a man of rude health and a body

as hard as a deep-sea fisherman. He was a man, too, of a rugged strength of character—the strength that comes from simplicity and singleness of aim and an unquestioning religious faith. On 22nd August the Emperor sent for him and offered him the command of the VIII. Army. As Chief of Staff he was given Ludendorff, who had just been awarded the Order of Merit for his performance at Liège. It was a formidable combination of personality and mind—a combination which was to come within an ace of winning for Germany the war.

The problem before the new general was a hard one. He had to stay the Russian advance, but he could get no reinforcements yet awhile from the west, and had to look only to what he could scrape together from the Vistula fortresses and the covering troops in Posen. His main asset was his admirable communications, for he had behind him lines by which he could move troops with great celerity from north to south. But the three corps in front of Rennenkampf were tired and depleted, and the 20th Corps before Samsonov seemed in no condition for a great effort. Ludendorff, as he surveyed the scene, recognized that only a bold *coup* would save him, for a retreat behind the Vistula seemed to him unthinkable. He resolved to gamble on the gap that separated the two Russian armies, and bring his whole strength to bear on Samsonov. Their easy victories had inspired in the Russian commanders a confidence not warranted by the facts of the case. Rennenkampf on the 25th was sitting down leisurely in front of the eastern defences of Königsberg. Samsonov was marching boldly through the wilderness of forest, lake, and marsh towards Osterode, his army strung out on a broad front, and his columns widely separated from each other. The German Intelligence service knew that region better than the Russians; if sufficient forces could be collected the unwary Samsonov might be destroyed. But these forces could only be got from Rennenkampf's front, and to move them was possible only if that general remained supine and ignorant of their transfer.

Rennenkampf was blind, and the great hazard was successfully taken. The 1st, 17th, and 1st Reserve Corps quietly slipped away southward, as well as one cavalry brigade, till on the 27th two cavalry brigades were all that remained facing Rennenkampf. On the morning of that day the German 1st Corps lay echeloned on the right about Gilgenburg, the 20th Corps and the 3rd Reserve Divisions were at Tannenberg, a Landwehr division was at Osterode, and the 17th and 1st Reserve Corps were north-east of Allenstein—

the whole forming a pocket into which Samsonov's five corps were slowly and carelessly marching. The battle began on the 26th with an affair of outposts, and for two days the Russians were under the impression that their attack was succeeding. They regarded their left as their dangerous flank, the right being apparently protected by Rennenkampf's position in the north. When they had thoroughly committed themselves to an offensive in impossible country, Hindenburg struck. He began by driving in the Russian left on the morning of the 28th, but this was only subsidiary to the deadly attack launched presently against their right wing east of Allenstein by the 17th and 1st Reserve Corps from Rennenkampf's front. The two corps of the Russian centre, with which were Samsonov and his staff, were driven back into the big wood of Tannenberg, and presently it was clear that the enemy had forced his way between the two Russian armies. The attacking line was now a huge crescent, strongest on the left, and Samsonov was being shepherded into an almost roadless country, where the difficulties would grow with every hour. From Ludendorff's own account it would appear that the southern road of retreat by Mlawa was still open, but the state of the communications between the units of the Second Russian Army made it impossible to execute what would have been a difficult movement, even had the chance in that direction been realized.

There only remained the defile towards Ortelsburg, where there was a spit of solid ground between the marshes. On the 30th the Russians were in full retreat along this narrow outlet, and the bulk of Samsonov's force was shut up in a tract of ground where, between the clumps of wood, lay treacherous swamps and wide muddy lakes. The Russian batteries as they retired found their guns sinking to the axle-trees. The last day of the battle, 31st August, was an unrelieved disaster for the Russian army. Samsonov died, but how or when no man can tell. The Second Russian Army had been five corps strong at the beginning of the fight. Little more than one complete corps and a portion of another succeeded in gaining Ortelsburg and retreating eastward by the line of the frontier railway. It was a very complete destruction. The Germans had between 80,000 and 90,000 prisoners in their hands, about the same number that had capitulated forty-four years before at Sedan. Hundreds of guns and ammunition wagons were taken, many of them left abandoned in swampy places, whence it was difficult for the victors to extricate their trophies. Huge

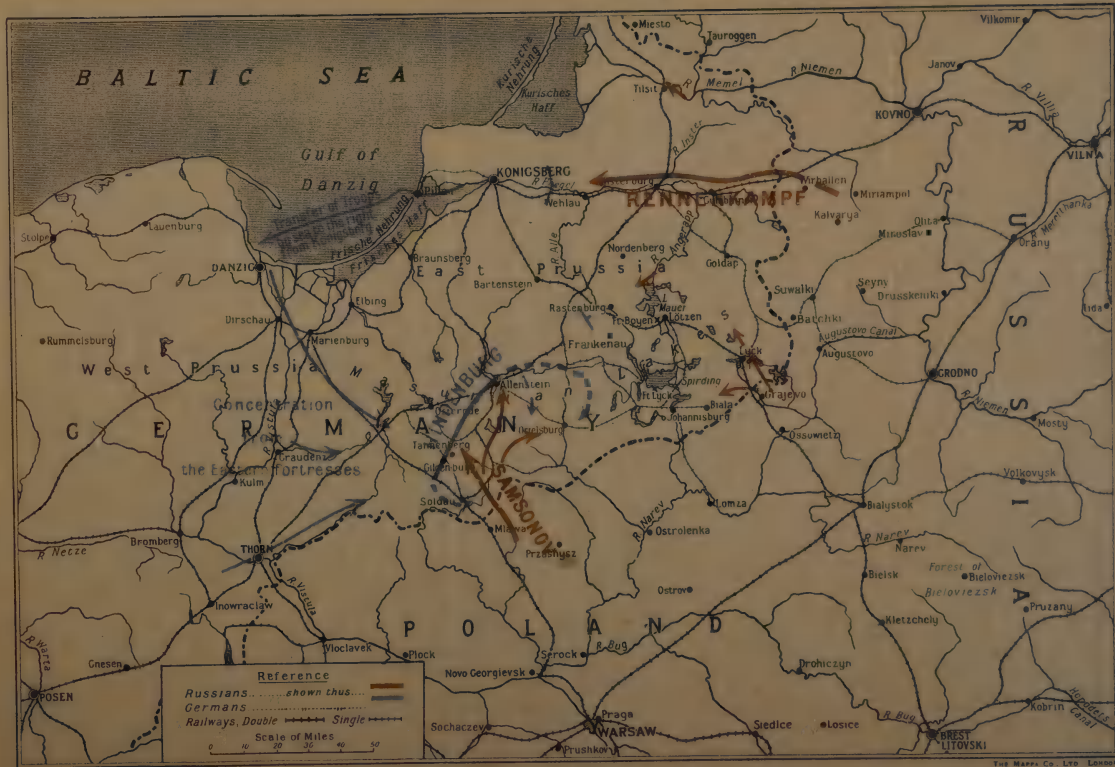
quantities of supplies were also captured in the derelict trains on the Ortelsburg-Allenstein railway.

Tannenberg ranks with the later Caporetto as one of the few battles in the war that in itself can be considered a complete and decisive victory. The veteran Hindenburg became the idol of the German people, and his triumph was well deserved. Strategically he had outmanœuvred his opponent; tactically he had shown, not for the first time in history, that with skilful handling a small force may envelop a larger. The battle bears a curious resemblance to Mukden, and in his last stricken hours Samsonov may have remembered that the German feint against one wing to hide a crushing attack on the other was the device which Oyama had used on Kuropatkin by means of Nogi's army. At Ludendorff's suggestion the action, which was at first called by the name of Osterode or Hohenstein, was christened Tannenberg in memory of that other battle, now gloriously avenged, when in 1410 the Lithuanian and Polish hosts had broken the power of the Teutonic Order.

The remnant of the defeated army retired across the frontier towards the Narev, followed up by a strong German pursuit. Without losing a day, Hindenburg set the main mass of his troops in movement towards the north-east along the Allenstein-Insterburg railway, which formed his line of supply. Rennenkampf, whose communications were now threatened, abandoned the attack on Königsberg at the news of Samsonov's disaster, left a position which he had elaborately prepared, and retreated eastward towards the Niemen. He had withdrawn beyond Insterburg before the German advance could come within striking distance. At Gumbinnen he fought a rearguard action with the German left, but he made no attempt to maintain himself in East Prussia. The invasion of that province had failed disastrously, and the Niemen for the moment must be the Russian line of defence.

It was now that Hindenburg made his first mistake. Rallying to his side all the German detachments in East Prussia, he crossed the Russian frontier in several columns on a broad front from Wirballen on the left to Augustovo on the right. In the wide forests near the latter place a single corps delayed his advance for a little, and there was much fighting among the woods before the eventual Russian retreat on Grodno. He occupied Suwalki, the capital of the Russian frontier province, and installed a German administration as if he regarded the district as a permanent annexation. There is evidence that he had reached a frame of mind, common to successful generals, which underrates the enemy's power of





OPERATIONS IN EAST PRUSSIA (Aug.-Sept. 1914).  
 (Facing p. 188.)

Map of the Eastern Front, 1941-1945, showing the advance of the German Wehrmacht from the Baltic coast to the Caucasus and the subsequent retreat. The map includes major cities, rivers, and the positions of the German and Soviet forces.

OPERATIONS IN EAST RUSSIA (Aug. - Sept. 1941)

(1941 x 100)



resistance. He was getting very near to that dangerous attitude which had been Samsonov's undoing, and he was to pay for his confidence. It is strange that the blunder should have been made, for it was obvious that, as Rennenkampf retired behind the Niemen, he must be falling back upon enormous forces supplied by the Russian mobilization. The province of Vilna was as certain to be strongly defended as the environs of Petrograd.

Hindenburg's confidence was communicated to his countrymen, and the moral effect of Tannenberg had a lasting influence on the war. Germany had anticipated great and immediate successes in the Western theatre, but no one believed that at the outset much could be done in the East. There the most that was hoped for was a defence that should for a time delay the Russian advance to the German frontier. But on the very day that news reached Berlin of the advance of the Germans to the gates of Paris there came tidings from the East that Hindenburg had destroyed a Russian army and cleared East Prussia of the invaders. Such a combination of successes might well intoxicate any people. All talk of a mere defence in the East was abandoned; Berlin began to clamour for an immediate advance on Warsaw; and Hindenburg was hailed as the greatest soldier of the day, who was destined to free Germany for good and all from the menace of the Slav. In popular esteem the laurels of this rugged veteran far eclipsed the modest chaplets of Kluck or Bülow. The Emperor raised him to the rank of Field-Marshal, and was soon to make him Commander-in-Chief of the armies in the East.

We turn now to the campaign in the south. On the Posen side the Germans, early in August, occupied the three towns of Kalisz, Czestochova, and Bendzin, just inside the Russian frontier. The second was probably taken to provide a rallying-point for that Polish revolt against Russia for which Germany fondly hoped; for Czestochova is one of the great religious centres to which pilgrims journey from every part of Poland, whether Russian, Austrian, or German. Presently they seized the Polish mining district of Dumbrovna, on the Silesian frontier, and, helped by the fact that their railway gauge was extended beyond the borderline, proceeded to transport coal to Germany. But on the Posen side there was no serious German advance during August. The German strategy for the moment was concerned with flanking movements, and their forces in Posen were only garrison troops and cavalry. In Galicia, however, the month of August saw a

campaign of the first importance. Austria had assembled north of the Carpathians a force of thirty divisions, with the Archduke Frederick as Commander-in-Chief and Conrad von Hoetzendorff as Chief of Staff. Her aim was a flank attack directed at the gap in the frontier line between Lublin and Cholm. For this purpose the I. Army under Dankl, and the IV. Army under Auffenberg, based upon Przemysl, were to advance northward; while the III. Army and part of the II., based upon Lemberg, were drawn up at right angles to them from the upper waters of the Bug as far south as the town of Halicz, to protect the right flank against any Russian attack from Kiev and Odessa. Apart from more distant objectives, it was vital for Austria to hold Galicia, for otherwise all her future plans would be compromised. For this an immediate offensive was necessary. Russia might cross the Galician frontier in three places—west of the point where the Vistula receives the waters of the San; between the San and the upper Bug; or on the east along the line of the river Sereth. The danger lay in a combined Russian movement against the first and third portions of the frontier, which would cut off and enclose the Austrian forces based upon Przemysl and Lemberg. To avoid this danger the boldest, and apparently the safest, plan was to advance northward against the Warsaw fortresses, for such a movement would in all likelihood prevent the Russian armies from crossing the Vistula, and defer any attack from the east against the Sereth. Austria gambled upon the incompleteness of the Russian mobilization. She knew that the initial concentration had taken place east of Warsaw, along the Bug and the Narev. The Army of the Narev was, as she knew, busily engaged in East Prussia, and the Army of the Bug appeared to be inconsiderable. She was aware of armies mustering to the east, south of the Pripet Marshes, and from the direction of Kiev; but she hoped by a vigorous attack delivered towards Warsaw to compel these armies to reinforce the Russian centre, by which time she trusted to the coming of strong reinforcements from Posen and Germany.

On 10th August Dankl crossed the Polish frontier, moving towards Krasnik, and established contact with the enemy a few days later about thirty miles south of Lublin. Here he was engaged with the smallest of Ivanov's forces, the Fourth Army, based on Brest Litovsk. Much outnumbered, the Russians slowly gave way, retreating eastwards towards the Bug valley, with their left protected by the fortress of Zamosc. That it was only a strategic retirement was presently made clear; for during the



third week of August the Third Russian Army, based on Kiev, began to cross the Galician frontier about Brody and move upon Lemberg from the east and north-east, menacing the right flank of Auffenberg's IV. Army. This force was commanded by Russki, one of the most learned of Russian soldiers and a professor at the War Academy, who in the Japanese campaign had been Chief of Staff to General Kaulbars, the commander of the 2nd Manchurian Army. Since then he had been the right-hand man of Sukhomlinov in his reorganization of the Russian forces. With him was associated a remarkable man, Radko Dmitrieff, who was born in 1859, in the little town of Grodez in Bulgaria, then a Turkish province. When his country obtained independence he was one of the first pupils who passed through the new military school at Sofia, and, since the Bulgarian army was then wholly under Russian control, finished his studies at the War Academy of Petrograd. He returned to his native land with the rank of captain on the eve of that rupture with Russia which in one day deprived the Bulgarian army of its staff, its generals, and most of its officers. Serbia seized the occasion to declare war, and Dmitrieff, suddenly promoted to the rank of colonel, brilliantly commanded a regiment in the campaign of Slivnitza. Later he was implicated in the conspiracy which ended in the abdication of Prince Alexander, and Stambulov forced him into exile. For more than ten years he served in the Russian army, and only returned to Bulgaria after the accession of Prince Ferdinand. In 1902 he became Chief of the General Staff, and commanded the military district on the Turkish frontier. When the war of the Balkan League broke out he commanded one of the Bulgarian armies, won the first victory at Kirk Kilisse, and led the left in the decisive battle of Lule Burgas-Bunarhissar. He was the popular hero of the Balkan War; but, weary of the quarrels among the allies which followed it, he accepted an offer to re-enter the Russian service. Meantime the Eighth Russian Army, based upon Odessa, which had been deputed to watch the Rumanian frontier till Rumania's neutrality was certain, was coming westward against Austria's right flank on the Sereth. It was commanded by Brussilov, a man then unknown to the world, but soon to be among the most famous of the Allied generals. By the 27th of August the forces of Brussilov and Russki were in touch, moving upon Lemberg and the III. and part of the II. Austrian Army in a vast semicircle. The line of battle now extended nearly two hundred miles from the Vistula to the Dniester.

A glance at the map will show how vital to Austria was the possession of Lemberg. It was the key of the road and railway system of Eastern Galicia. It was the administrative capital of the province, and its most important commercial centre. For many centuries it had been a strongly-walled city, but of its old defences all that now remained was the citadel, an obsolete fortress without military value. The place was not fortified in the ordinary sense, and its defence depended upon the field armies. During the last week of August Russki fought his way slowly across the upper Bug, and found himself facing the entrenchments of the Austrian right centre along the Gnila Lipa, a tributary of the Dniester. His right wing was flung out well to the north-west, and was threatening to turn Auffenberg's right flank in the direction of Tomasov. Meantime Brussilov had been hotly engaged on the Sereth. He captured the town of Tarnopol about the 27th; a heavy engagement, which lasted for nearly three days, the Austrian entrenchments being stormed with the bayonet. The loss of Tarnopol compelled the Austrian right to fall back from the Sereth towards the Lemberg trenches. Brussilov next swept upon Halicz, the ancient town on the Dniester which gave its name to Galicia. It was from Halicz that, in 1259, King Daniel of Ruthenia sent his son, Prince Leo, to found the new city of Leopol, which the Germans call Löwenburg, the Russians Lvov, and which we know as Lemberg. The surrounding country is largely a series of volcanic ridges and extinct craters, admirably suited for defensive works. After two days' fierce conflict Brussilov carried the Dniester, occupied Halicz, and wheeled northward towards Lemberg.

The Battle of Lemberg began on 1st September, and the main fighting lasted for two days. Its chief feature was a fierce attack by Brussilov on the Austrian right, aided by Dmitrieff, who carried the line of the Gnila Lipa; while Russki's right, sweeping round to the north of the city, drove in the Austrian left and threatened its communications. By the evening of 2nd September both of the Austrian wings had been driven in, and their line had been forced back into a flattened curve, with its left in imminent danger of collapse under Russki's attack. Early in the morning of 3rd September the Austrian Staff decided to abandon Lemberg, although as yet there had been no serious attack on the entrenched positions east of the city. At half-past ten on the morning of Thursday, 3rd September, the Russian flag broke from the flag-staff of the town hall. The population welcomed the conquerors

with enthusiasm. Huge quantities of stores of every kind fell into Russian hands, and the total number of prisoners taken in the fighting of that week cannot have been less than 100,000. The Russians behaved with exemplary restraint. There was no looting or any kind of outrage. A Russian governor, Count Bobrinski, was appointed, and the city was carefully policed. The Grand Duke Nicholas issued a proclamation to the many races of the Dual Monarchy, which was skilfully framed, not only for Galicia, but for the discontented peoples beyond the Carpathians.

But the Austrian III. Army could not save itself by flight, for Russki was round its left flank. The result of two armies moving on divergent lines was now to reveal itself, for Russki was also threatening Auffenberg's right. There was no halt after Lemberg. Brussilov divided his army, and sent his left wing into the Carpathian passes. Within the next ten days he had occupied Stryj, a town commanding the approach to the Uzsok Pass, and Czernovitz, the capital of Bukovina. His centre and right advanced due westward along the railway towards Przemysl, while Dmitrieff with Russki's left wing marched on a line between Grodek and Rava Russka, the railway junction where the line from Lemberg joins the line which follows the Galician frontier. Russki himself moved north-westward with his right to reinforce the Russian Fourth Army on the Bug.

Meantime Dankl was in sore straits. The news of the fall of Halicz and Lemberg had convinced him of his peril, and he had to bethink himself of a way of meeting it. The natural course would have been to fall back and link up with Auffenberg on the San. A possible course was to attack at once before the Russian Army of the Bug could be reinforced, disperse it, and take Russki on the flank. This latter and bolder plan was the one adopted. Dankl had now received considerable reinforcements. His left was reinforced by von Woyrsch's German Landwehr Corps and a cavalry division from Cracow. It rested on the Vistula at Opole, and in case of a Russian turning movement across that river another German force from Czestochova moved towards it. The centre, under Dankl, extended just south of the Lublin-Cholm railway, behind Krasnostav, and then bent southward towards the Galician frontier at Tomasov; on the right Auffenberg's IV. Army, which had now been largely strengthened, lay from Rava Russka to just west of Grodek.

The first effort of the Austrian counter-offensive was made on 4th September, against the Russian centre. But that centre was

unexpectedly strong, and the attack collapsed. Thereupon the initiative passed to the Russians, and heavy fighting began on 6th September. The Russian strategy in these engagements completely outclassed the Austrian. Following the tactics of Mukden and Tannenberg, the Fourth Army feinted against the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand on the Austrian left, while the real Russian strength was being massed for an attack on the Austrian right. From 6th–10th September the battle was joined everywhere from the Vistula to the upper Dniester. On the 10th the Archduke Joseph, on the hills between Opole and Turobin, was decisively beaten by a brilliant frontal attack, aided by superior Russian gunnery, and was driven in ignominious retreat southward towards the San. In the Austrian centre things went no better. Dankl held on gallantly to the broken country between Turobin and Tomasov, but by 10th September the pressure on his right compelled him to fall back. It was that right, Auffenberg's army, which had to face the heaviest attack, for against it came the victors of Lemberg, Russki and Dmitrieff. At Rava Russka it met its fate, being taken in flank and in front, and dispersed in utter confusion. When a "refused" flank is turned or broken, it means that the enemy gets well behind the centre of the defeated army. This was what now happened. The whole Austrian force hurled itself southward in acute disorder. The defeated right found sanctuary in Przemysl and Jaroslav; the rest fled westward across the San and the Wisloka, and soon the vanguard of the flight was under the guns of Cracow.

Austria had not been more successful in her operations in Serbia. Her two first line corps had been withdrawn from Bosnia and sent north, and she attempted to conquer the country with second line troops. For some weeks there was much desultory and unrelated fighting, such as Balkan wars have often shown. The most serious engagements were along the line of the lower Save, more especially the struggle for Shabatz and the railway which connected with Losnitza on the Drina. On 12th August Shabatz fell, but on the 16th the Serbians checked the Austrian advance in that neighbourhood. On the same day a strong Austrian force from Bosnia, under General Potiorek, crossed the Drina and took the towns of Lesnitza and Losnitza, its object being to co-operate with the Shabatz contingent and pen the Serbians in the triangle of land between the Save and Drina and Jadar. But on the 19th the Serbian Crown Prince attacked the Bosnian army



OPERATIONS IN GALICIA (Aug.-Sept. 1914).

(Facing p. 194.)





OPERATIONS IN GALICIA (Aug-Sept. 1914)

(Scale 1:50,000)

1st Army  
 1st Division  
 2nd Division

1:50,000

Map of Galicia, Spain, showing the operations of the 1st Army from August to September 1914. The map includes a legend, a scale bar, and a title. The legend identifies the 1st Army, the 1st Division, and the 2nd Division. The scale bar indicates a scale of 1:50,000. The title is 'OPERATIONS IN GALICIA (Aug-Sept. 1914)'. The map shows the 1st Army's advance from the coast into the interior of Galicia, with the 1st Division and 2nd Division operating in different sectors. The map also shows the main rivers and roads of the region.

on both banks of the Jadar, and after four days' hard fighting completely defeated it. The fire of their Creusot guns began what the rifle and the bayonet completed, and the troops, which had learned their trade at Kumanovo, Uskub, and Monastir, drove the Austrians with great loss across the Drina. By the 24th August Shabatz was evacuated, and the Serbians could claim with truth that they had cleared their country of the enemy.

The end of the first week of September marked the close of the first round in the Eastern campaign. Russia, only partially prepared, had hurled herself into the combat, and in East Prussia had paid heavily for her temerity. But her sacrifice had not been fruitless, for it had its influence on the greater struggle in the West; and though she had lost the bulk of one army, she was now safe behind the Niemen. For the rest, her own territory was untrodden by the enemy, save for a few German detachments near the Posen border. On the other hand, at the very outset she had brought Austria to the brink of demoralization. The main armies of the Dual Monarchy had been routed in four great battles, and were fleeing westward; the Russian flag flew over Lemberg; Russian cavalry were crossing the Carpathians, and Russian armies were pressing on with their faces towards Cracow. In the field she had done enough to waken her national confidence and to compel the enemy to revise his plans. She had also thrown down the gage of a war to the bitter end, for on the 15th August the Grand Duke Nicholas, on behalf of his Emperor, had issued to Poland a proclamation promising that self-government which had been the object of a century's agitation. In the old proud days Poland had been a great kingdom. Then came evil times, till in 1772 began those acts of public brigandage by Austria, Russia, and Prussia, with the rest of Europe consenting, which form perhaps the most shameful violation in history of international decency. Poland was an unconscionable time a-dying, and not till the first quarter of last century was the partition complete. Her plunder did not greatly benefit the brigands. Galicia gave Austria many anxious moments, Prussian Poland was a thorn in the Kaiser's side, and Russia only maintained her rule in Warsaw by the ready sword. Of the three, Russia seemed to stand in the most favourable position, for she was a Slav power dealing with fellow-Slavs, though divided from them by a difference in religious creeds. Home Rule for Poland was an idea which the Emperor had long had under consideration. Now he was committed to it, and to

much more ; for he was bound not only to make Russian Poland a self-governing state under Russia's protection, but to reconstitute its old boundaries. It meant that, if the Allies won, Austria and Germany must disgorge—that Galicia must be given up by one and Prussian Poland by the other. At the beginning of the campaign Russia had made it clear what territory she would demand when the campaign was over. She was fighting for Danzig, Posen, and Cracow ; and such a demand Germany would never concede unless utterly routed. We know Bismarck's views on this question. "Nobody doubts," he had said in 1894, "that we would have to be crushed before we gave up Alsace. The same applies in still greater measure to our eastern frontier. We cannot dispense either with Posen or Alsace, with Posen still less than with Alsace. . . . Munich and Stuttgart are not more endangered by a hostile occupation of Strassburg or Alsace than Berlin would be by an enemy in the neighbourhood of the Oder. . . . How our existence could shape itself if a new kingdom of Poland were to be formed nobody has yet had the courage to inquire."

By the close of the first week of September in the Western theatre a no less dramatic change had come over the scene. We must return to the great battle which had meantime been joined between Paris and Lorraine.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE WEEK OF SEDAN.

*26th August—5th September.*

Comparison of Situation with 1870—The Defence of Paris—Kluck changes Direction—His Justification—The Eve of the Marne—Joffre issues Orders for Battle.

THE opening of September brought round the Day of Sedan, that anniversary which for more than forty years has been the national festival of the German Empire. Berlin witnessed a demonstration that was designed to advertise to the Fatherland and to the world that triumphs were being won no less glorious than the victories of 1870. Escorted by brilliant troops, with bands playing patriotic airs, many captured guns were drawn through the gaily decked streets. There one might see Belgian and French cannon and a few British pieces, carefully repaired and remounted to conceal the fact that they had not been taken by a dashing charge but picked up shattered and useless on some Picardy battlefield. When the parade was over the guns were parked before the Imperial Palace, and the citizens of Berlin had pleasant talk of successes already secured, of hostile armies in process of dissolution, and of Paris to be occupied before the week of Sedan had ended. The momentary depression caused by the entry of Britain into the war had passed. In their chief newspapers they read that words were too weak to describe the magnitude of the German triumph. It was a pardonable exaggeration, for in wartime the patriotic journalist does not deal in strict values, and the German press had some foundation for its rhetoric. In the Eastern theatre the invasion of East Prussia had been stayed, and the tide of battle was clearly on the turn. In the West, fortress after fortress had fallen before the shock of the German guns, or had surrendered to the mere menace of their attack. Belgium had been overrun, its capital occupied, its army pent up behind the forts of Antwerp. The Allied armies of France and England had assumed the offensive along the frontier,

and in ten days had been driven back a hundred miles to that valley which Napoleon had held to be the last defence of Paris. To the annals of German arms there had been added a new roll of battles won. For the future German historian the names of Morhange and Virton, Longwy and the Semoy, Charleroi and Mons and Dinant, Tournai, Le Cateau, Bapaume, and Reithel would be names of victory. There were the broad, indisputable facts that the Allied armies had yielded ground everywhere day by day; that the German armies had poured into France like a rising flood sweeping over a lowland when the dykes are broken; and, if the dykes were to be represented by the fortresses, it seemed that Germany in her new artillery had an engine that could swiftly and surely level every barrier to her triumphant march. Such were, in German eyes, the situation and the outlook in the first days of the week of Sedan. At the moment it seemed that this rosy estimate had good warrant, and that the German "plan" was working with mechanical precision. France would be swiftly crushed, and then whole armies, flushed with victory, could be transferred to the Eastern battle front for a march on the Vistula.\*

On 26th August Galliéni had been appointed Governor of Paris, and his predecessor, Michel, had volunteered to serve under him. Galliéni was a veteran of 1870, and as a young officer of marines he had fought in Lebrun's corps in the desperate defence of Bazeilles on the day of Sedan. He was best known in France as the soldier who had completed the conquest of Madagascar, and reorganized the great island as a French colony. It was this talent for organization that marked him out as the man for his new post. The defences of the French capital had been widely extended since the siege of 1870, when the circuit of the outlying forts was about thirty-two miles. Erected under the defence scheme of Thiers in the days of Louis Philippe, they had been planned to resist the attack of the short-range artillery of the period, and in the siege they could not protect the city from bombardment. De Rivières' plans, drawn up in 1874, included Versailles in the region to be defended, and the new fortifications were a second outer ring of forts, redoubts, and batteries covering a circle of more than seventy-five miles, and holding all the high ground on which the Germans in 1870 had erected their siege guns. The drawback of such a vast entrenched camp was that it required a huge army for its garrison, and though

\* Moltke had named the thirty-ninth or fortieth day after mobilization as the date of the decision in the West (K. F. Novak's *Der Weg zur Katastrophe*). He was almost exactly right—but in a sense different from what he meant.

its extent made investment almost impossible, no such operation was required for the attack. As the parallel case of Antwerp was to show, if the Germans had appeared before Paris in September 1914 they would have concentrated their efforts upon one sector of the outlying circle of forts, and if they had broken through these the inner line would have been of small value, and the city itself would have been at once exposed to long-range bombardment. Further, it was an open secret that even the outer and newer defences were not of any great strength. They were old-fashioned works of the 1874 type, planned before the days of high explosive shells, and no effort had been made to bring them up to date, for the French Government had come to regard an attack on Paris as outside the range of practical possibilities. The works had even been neglected. They were armed with old guns, and there was a deficiency of stores for completing the defences between the forts. To take one example, the amount of barbed wire for entanglements did not suffice for even one front of the great fortress. Galliéni, on his appointment to the command, did what he could in the last days of August to remedy the neglect of years. Trenches were dug on a circumference of a hundred miles, guns and munitions assembled, and supplies collected for a population of four million. But it was hopeless to think to complete in a few days a work that demanded many thousands of hands for many weeks.

Paris had refused to be alarmed by the exploits of German airmen who made daring flights over the city and dropped bombs into the streets. Curiosity seemed to banish fear. Instead of taking refuge under cover, men, women, and children stood gazing up at the enemy's war-hawks. When, in the last days of August, however, the official news at last admitted that the Allied armies were everywhere in retreat, when numbers of strayed and wounded soldiers appeared in the streets, and the distant growling of cannon and the blowing up of bridges could be heard from the north-eastern suburbs, there came a wave of anxiety and alarm. A considerable exodus began of the well-to-do classes, who dreaded a siege, and could afford to make a long journey. There was much movement to England by way of Havre, the trains making their way to the coast by devious roads, mostly on the west bank of the Seine. The exodus to the southern provinces and overseas accounted for perhaps one-quarter of the normal population of the capital. Those who were in the secrets of the Government had most cause for alarm. On the 28th it was resolved to declare Paris an open town and abandon it, but on the 30th this decision

was cancelled, and Galliéni announced that he had received Joffre's orders to defend the capital against all invaders and would fulfil the mandate to the end—" *jusqu'au bout*," a phrase soon to become a national watchword. On the night of the 31st it was known that the Government meant to leave the city, and two days later the President and the Ministers departed for Bordeaux. The step awoke disquieting memories of 1870. Already the enemy was as near to the towers of Notre Dame as is Windsor to the dome of St. Paul's.

But in truth there was no parallel. In the month of campaigning that ended at Sedan France was irrevocably beaten. The first engagement at Saarbruck took place on 2nd August. On 4th August the German armies began to pass the frontier. On the 6th the French right under MacMahon was defeated at Wörth, and the left, under Frossard, at Forbach. Then came Napoleon III.'s first reluctant admission of failure, the telegram to Paris, "*Tout peut se rétablir*"—"All may yet be regained"—a confession that much had been already lost. MacMahon retreated to Châlons; Bazaine, with the "Army of the Rhine," fell back on Metz, and, as the result of the three battles which ended at Gravelotte (St. Privat) on 18th August, was penned up in that fortress. Then came MacMahon's ill-advised march north-eastward, a movement imposed upon him for political reasons by the Paris Regency. It ended on 1st September in the surrender at Sedan. The Germans advanced to the siege of Paris, and the French Government was transferred to Tours. But France was beaten, not because the invader had marched far into the country and was about to besiege her capital—not even because the Germans had been victorious at Weissenburg, Spicheren, Wörth, Borny, Mars-la-Tour, Gravelotte, and Sedan. She was vanquished because her field armies were, in the military sense of the word, "destroyed." About a quarter of a million men had been sent to the eastern frontier, where they had met some 400,000 Germans. After heavy losses in the field, 170,000 were shut up in Metz, and less than 50,000 reached Châlons, where they were reinforced by about the same number, and marched out to surrender at Sedan. The army of Châlons was thus utterly swept away; the army of Metz was shut up in the fortress, and doomed presently to a like fate. There remained to France only one or two regular units, some improvised armies of depot troops, mostly young recruits, the half-drilled or wholly untrained National Guards and Mobs, and a few corps of Volunteers. These raw levies



had to be enrolled, armed, and given some rough instruction, and then hurried into action under officers who, for the most part, knew nothing of their business, and soon found to their cost that the most reckless courage was useless without discipline. Bismarck contemptuously described them as "not soldiers, but men with muskets." The war dragged on till the following January; but every element of success, except devoted bravery, was absent. Improvised armies, directed in their general strategy by a group of politicians, fought in vain against well-ordered forces, more than a million strong, directed by a brilliant staff and led by veteran generals. They could not secure victory, but they fought on to the end for the honour of France. The fate of the campaign had been decided on two battlefields in the first month of operations—Gravelotte which doomed the army of Bazaine, and Sedan which destroyed the army of MacMahon.

Let us compare with this the situation in the week of Sedan in 1914. Once more, within a month of the day when the first shots were fired—nay, within a fortnight of the first great battles—the French armies found themselves defeated and driven from the frontier; the German invaders had marched so far into the heart of the land that again a siege of Paris seemed imminent; and the Government was forced to abandon the capital. But, apart from the fact that France, which had stood alone in the terrible days of 1870, now fought beside powerful allies, the whole situation was radically different, and different in the one great essential. The Allied armies had, indeed, suffered defeat in a gigantic clash of arms, compared to which the battles of 1870 were small engagements; but they had not been destroyed. They were still intact, and ready to measure themselves once more against the invader. They had trained men ready to make good their losses. The Germans had failed in their main object—to put masses of their opponents permanently out of action in a decisive battle, so that the subsequent operations would be merely a gathering up of the fruits of victory. After Sedan the Germans had to face only improvised levies. After the anniversary of Sedan in this new invasion they had still before them the unbroken might of France and Britain. In war partial successes count for nothing except in so far as they pave the way for the "decision"—the definite success that destroys the opponent's resistance. The mere occupation of ground, the seizure of towns, the overrunning of provinces, may serve a useful purpose, but these are not the decisive factors. The one thing that counts is the dispersion, disarmament,

and capture of the enemy's fighting force, or its reduction to such a state that resisting power has gone out of it.

Apart from the military position, the *moral* of the nation was wholly different from 1870. There had been no easy confidence of victory, no boasting, no singing of music-hall catches, when the French armies marched north and east. War had come to France as a solemn duty, long foreseen—a national sacrifice of which the cost had been counted. 1870 had been for her a year of crumbling constitutions. The Napoleonic bubble had burst; the "Liberal Empire" of M. Ollivier had suffered no better fate; everywhere there were dissolution, discontent, and distrust. The politicians, not the soldiers, directed the war, and the politicians were cast in a mean mould. The riff-raff of the population was out of hand, and power was passing to the fanatics and mountebanks of the Commune. In 1870 there were parties, but it was hard to find a nation. In 1914 France had forgotten all lesser rivalries, and was united in one grave and inflexible purpose. In M. Poincaré she had as President a man whose brilliant attainments and sober good sense carried on the best traditions of Republican statesmanship. On 27th August the Ministry was reconstructed on a national basis. Under M. Viviani as Premier, M. Delcassé became Foreign Minister, M. Millerand Minister of War, M. Ribot Minister of Finance, M. Briand Minister of Justice. In this cabinet of defence all political schools were represented. M. Clemenceau, indeed, stood outside, but that was scarcely a disadvantage, for the famous "destroyer of Ministries" remained to act the part of a critical but patriotic Opposition. In all the land there was no dissentient voice. M. Jaurès, the leader of the pacifists, had died by an assassin's hand on the last day of July, but not before he had blessed his country's enterprise. Even M. Hervé, the international socialist, who in the past had talked of "consigning the tricolour to the dunghill," now recanted his errors, and volunteered for service in the ranks. From statesmen and people there would be no folly forthcoming to tie the hands of the armies in the impending crisis.

In every campaign there comes a moment of high tide, when the strength of one of the combatants is stretched taut, and on the fighting of the next day or two depends the success or failure of a great strategical plan. That moment was now approaching in the Western theatre. By one of the mysterious anticlimaxes so common in war, a complete change was coming over the scene. The time had arrived for the Allies to strike back and go forward.

With the battles on the Marne—battles to be fought on a front of more than a hundred miles—began a new act in the drama. To understand this most complex movement it is necessary to examine the mind of the German and Allied commands in the closing days of the retreat.

We must first consider the plan of German Great Headquarters. There is no evidence that at any time they regarded Paris as the main object of attack, though all their armies were cheered by the promise of a speedy entry into the French capital. Their military theorists from Clausewitz to Bernhardt had consistently preached the doctrine of the "major objective," the destruction of the enemy's field army. They were not blind to the peculiar importance of Paris; Bernhardt had classed it with Vienna as one of the two capitals the capture of which had a decisive military importance; but the taking of it, while Joffre's armies remained intact, might well prove a doubtful blessing. They were correctly informed about its defences, and realized that, while a sector could no doubt be taken by assault, the enterprise would be costly and slow, and would require a German army and a great weight of artillery, while in the meantime the main French forces would have leisure to recover. For investment they simply had not the men. By the end of August, when the resolution of the French Government and of Gallieni was apparent, they may well have been convinced that even the capture of Paris would not mean the demoralization of France. For one moment, as we have seen, they had wavered in this view. After Le Cateau they seem to have believed that the enemy was indeed broken, and Kluck was ordered to move south-west to the lower Seine and so bring the capital inside the battle-line. But Lanrezac's turn at Guise on the 29th disillusioned them, and they acquiesced in Kluck's proposal to swerve south-east, closing up on Bülow, and so leave Paris on his right flank. In this decision they wished to take all due precautions against a sally from inside the Paris defences. On the night of 2nd September Kluck was informed that the intention was to drive the French in a south-easterly direction away from the capital, and was ordered to follow in echelon behind Bülow and make himself responsible for the flank protection of the German front. That he chose to disregard this order was not the fault of Great Headquarters.

But in a sense he was justified in his disobedience. Great Headquarters wished to have both success and security, and the two were incompatible. Their urgent need was a decisive victory.

Things were in a perilous state in the East, in spite of Tannenberg. Austria was stumbling from failure to failure, and would presently need help. Already corps had had to be sent eastward from France, and large bodies of troops were detained at Antwerp, at Brussels, at Maubeuge, and along the ever lengthening communications. Kluck and Bülow, the marching wing of the advance, had been compelled to shed brigades as if there were no armies of France before them. By this time the German forces had lost any chance of superiority in numbers. Their men, who had broken every record for their speed of advance, were, as the daily reports of the army commanders told them, very weary. "The men stagger forward," wrote one of Kluck's officers on 2nd September, "their faces coated with dust, their uniforms in rags, looking like living scarecrows. They march with their eyes closed, singing in chorus so that they shall not fall asleep. . . . It is only the delirium of victory which sustains our men, and, in order that their bodies may be as intoxicated as their souls, they drink to excess, but this drunkenness helps to keep them going. . . . Abnormal stimulants are necessary to make abnormal fatigue endurable. We will put all that right in Paris." The German people might be confident and hilarious, but Great Headquarters knew that their fortunes were on a razor edge. At all costs they must bring the enemy to action at once and secure a decision.

So far they had to admit that they had not succeeded. There had been a week's futile delay in Belgium. The chance of enveloping the enemy on the Sambre had failed. It had failed even more ignominiously on the Somme. Now the attempt had to be made under far more difficult conditions, but made it must be. To relapse into anything approaching a defensive would take the heart out of the troops and deprive the armies of the fruit of their cumulative blows. Joffre might strike back with deadly consequences at a puzzled and dispirited front. Therefore the risk of Paris must be faced, and the envelopment, which had so far failed, must be achieved south of the Marne. How great the risk was the High Command did not know owing to the faultiness of their Intelligence service. They discovered it on the evening of 4th September, and ordered the I. and II. Armies to halt facing the eastern front of Paris. But by that time the mischief had been done. The I. Army was over the Marne and approaching the Seine, and had now to conform to Joffre's will.

The true criticism of the German High Command is not that out of pedantry it forewent its chance of demoralizing the enemy



by the seizure of his capital. That seizure could not have been made without exposing the German armies to a fatal *riposte*, and in any case it would not have met the clamorous need to put Joffre out of action. A battle for Germany was an instant necessity, and she took the only way to secure it. Where she failed was far back in her whole conception of enveloping strategy. To envelop great armies without a colossal superiority in numbers was from the start a forlorn hope. It was a plan born of over-confidence and one contrary to the doctrine of Clausewitz, who had always taught that the manœuvre was impossible unless the enemy force was wholly engaged with the attackers' centre.\*

Kluck, on whom the main duty of envelopment lay, fulfilled what he believed to be the spirit of the orders of Great Headquarters, but disobeyed them in detail. So far, partly from the poverty of his information and partly because of the preposterous handling of the cavalry, for which he was not wholly responsible, he had been grossly unsuccessful. He had let the British army slip out on at least three occasions when he had had it in his hand. But the man was of a resolute temper and a born leader of troops, and he would not consent to failure. He saw Germany's need for a decisive battle, and he was resolved to give it her. For this reason he refused to obey the order of 28th August to march to the southwest, and on the 30th began to turn south and south-east to close in on the II. Army. His object was to find the operative flank of the enemy, which he conceived to be the French Fifth Army. The great decision to neglect Paris was made on or before the 30th; it was known to regimental officers, as we learn from captured letters, not later than 3rd September; and his two left corps, the 9th and the 3rd, may have guessed it on 1st September when they crossed the Aisne. He was aware of the danger from Paris, and detached his 4th Reserve Corps and a cavalry division to cover his right rear. Apart altogether from the instructions of Great Headquarters, he could only hope to deal with Paris by using the whole of his army, and this would have meant an enormous widening of the gap between him and Bülow, which as late as 4th

\* See also Freytag-Loringhoven's remarks, *Deductions from the World War* (Eng. trans., p. 80). The *locus classicus* on the subject is a passage in von der Goltz's *Kriegführung* (a much better book than his more popular *Volk im Waffen*). There he distinguishes an ordinary flank attack (*Flügelangriff*) from the more deadly operation of envelopment. Envelopment may be either *Umfassung* or *Umgehung*, the former being the envelopment of one flank, as at Sadowa, the latter a complete surrounding, as at Sedan. In August 1914 the Germans aimed primarily at *Umfassung*, but even the limited envelopment demanded, on von der Goltz's showing, either great numerical superiority or a complete breakdown in the enemy's *moral*.

September was nearly fifty miles. To take Paris was impossible for a single German army ; even to secure the German flank against any danger from Paris would have required the whole of Kluck's forces. If the French left was to be enveloped and a great battle fought, every available man would be needed ; it was imperative, therefore, that the minimum rearguard should be left to watch the capital, while he took his main force south-eastward against the French left. He was conscious of the risk, but decided on the evidence before him that the risk was justified.

Such we may assume to have been the reasoning of the commander of the I. Army. His whole thoughts were directed to forcing battle, and with this in mind he deliberately neglected the orders of 2nd September to echelon himself behind Bülow. At the moment a considerable part of his force was beyond the Marne, while the II. Army was a good day's march behind. To carry out the instructions of Great Headquarters would mean a two days' halt, which would not only give the enemy a chance to recover but would prevent the projected envelopment. It is difficult to say that Kluck's decision was wrong. If the major objective, the battle, was to be attained, complete security from the direction of Paris was impossible, unless Great Headquarters sent him four or five more divisions. He was gambling, but gambling with a cool head, carrying out the main purpose of his superiors, and to this end disregarding any contradictory instructions on details. Whatever he did he must take risks, but the risks, on the information he possessed, seemed not unreasonable. So he pressed on till on the 5th September he was south of the Grand Morin. In about thirty days his army had covered 312 miles without a rest—an achievement of which much of the renown must rest with its dogged commanding officer.

The last stage, presenting as it did a flank to the enemy, has been and must continue to be among the most sharply criticized movements of the campaign. But the failure in which it resulted does not necessarily involve an extreme reprobation of the responsible general. Kluck was left with no other choice. If an enveloping battle was required, it was the only means to force it. It may be argued, indeed, that an army commander is entitled to protest against a decision of the High Command which is clearly suicidal, that Kluck was of a stalwart and independent character, and that he did not protest. But it is certain that on the meagre information which he possessed, the decision did not appear suicidal or the risk unjustifiable. He, like all the other army commanders,

was kept ill-informed about the general situation. He did not know what was happening to his colleagues, "whose reports of decisive victories," he complained, "have so far been frequently followed by appeals for support." He did not hear till the evening of 5th September that the German left wing, which he had believed to be triumphantly advancing, was checked before the eastern fortresses. The lack of this knowledge was responsible for his misjudging of the offensive capacities of Paris. He had no great respect for the divisions of Maunoury with which he had hitherto been in touch, and considered that his rearguard was competent to hold them. He thought that the French armies of the centre and right were so closely engaged that they could not spare troops to move to the left behind the French front. He thought, as did Great Headquarters, that the stout defence in Lorraine meant the presence there of far larger forces than was in reality the case. He erred, too, in underestimating the British army. He thought that it was broken, demoralized, and out of action. The litter and debris of the retreat had convinced him that its transport was in chaos, and, since he assumed that its base was the eastern Channel ports, he conceived that he had cut its only communications, and that it now wandered a forlorn remnant south of the Seine. Like all his class he forgot that a maritime Power can change its base at will—that, as Francis Bacon wrote three hundred years ago: "He that commands the sea is at great liberty." These miscalculations, which were shared by his superiors, were to bring him defeat; but, granted the data on which he had to work, it is hard to see how he could have decided otherwise.\*

We turn to the French Command. After the *débâcle* of 24th August Joffre had, as we have seen, revised his whole conception of the campaign, and resolved to disengage his armies by a strategic retirement and fall back to such a position as would enable him to use the reserves which he was hastily collecting. These reserves consisted of Maunoury's Sixth Army on the extreme French left, and Foch's Ninth Army in the centre between Franchet d'Esperey and Langle de Cary. The Ninth Army, which was a reorganization of commands rather than a reinforcement, had been coming into place during the last week of August, and sharing

\* Kluck has been severely criticized by most English writers on the war; less severely and more acutely by the French (except General Cherfils). The view given above is based principally on his own narrative, *The March on Paris* (Eng. trans., 1920), on Bülow's *Mein Bericht zur Marneschlacht*, 1919, and the pamphlet *Die Schlachten an der Marne*, 1916, believed to reflect the views of the younger Moltke.

in the general retreat. When completed it was to consist of the 42nd Division, taken from the 6th Corps of the Third Army; the 9th and 11th Corps, from the Fourth Army; the 52nd and 60th Reserve Divisions, also from the Fourth Army; and the 9th Division of cavalry. It could only assemble slowly, but by 3rd September most of it lay to the east of Epernay. Joffre correctly assumed that the German plan of envelopment included the breach of his centre, and Foch was there to strengthen it. Maunoury's Sixth Army, which had to be brought from greater distances, was still slower in its formation. It was to consist of the 7th Corps from Alsace, the 4th Corps from the Third Army, Sordet's 1st Cavalry Corps, four reserve divisions—the 55th, 56th, 61st, and 62nd—a Moroccan brigade, and the new 45th Division, composed of troops from Algeria. But the 45th Division would not be ready till 6th September, and the 4th Corps would only detrain in Paris on the 5th. On the evening of 2nd September, while the Germans were in Senlis, Maunoury's force, as yet far from completion and part of it very weary with its fighting from Arras southward, lay behind the shelter of the forests of Ermenonville and Chantilly, across the north-eastern suburbs of Paris from Dammartin to the Marne. On that day Joffre had not yet his mass of manœuvre in readiness for action.

The French Commander-in-Chief had kept an open mind as to when and where he should make his stand. He had hoped for the Somme, but Kluck's south-western wheel had convinced him that that was impossible, and he had the fortitude to resist the temptation of a local success like Guise, and possess his soul in patience till the appointed time. On the 29th, as we have seen, he told Sir John French that he had resolved to fall back behind the Marne. At that date he was willing to make Paris an open town, but next day the arguments of Galliéni made him consent to its defence. But he was not prepared to allow any part of his field force to be entangled there, always excepting Maunoury's Sixth Army, for which it was the base and place of assembly. On 1st September he contemplated a great extension of the retreat. He wished the enemy to go deeper into the sack he had prepared for him, and he wanted time to get ready the string of that sack, the Sixth Army. He also hoped for news of a Russian victory which would dislocate the German plans. On 1st September he indicated to his armies as the probable limit of their retirement a line behind the Seine, the Aube, and the Orvain. He seems to have imagined that Kluck would be engaged with Maunoury and the British on the



east front of Paris, and in that case he intended to fling his strongest army, the Fifth, through the gap between Kluck and Bülow and against Bülow's unprotected right. This decision, even remembering that it was taken in ignorance of the exact details of Kluck's change of direction, was beyond doubt a blunder. To resume the offensive behind a large river like the Seine would have been a difficult task against an enemy far superior in heavy artillery. No provision, moreover, was made for holding bridgeheads on the northern bank for the purpose of recrossing. Had these orders been carried out, the Germans might well have occupied a position on the Seine such as they were later to create on the Aisne. There would have been no Battle of the Marne, and soon Paris and Verdun would have fallen. Nay, worse might have followed, for the line suggested was impossible, since it had no flanking supports to take the place of the Meuse Heights and the capital.\*

But fate intervened to correct the error. About midnight on 31st August Maunoury telegraphed to Galliéni that Kluck seemed to be sheering off from Paris. That evening, it will be remembered, the flank guard of the I. Army was Marwitz's cavalry, heading south-eastward through the forest of Compiègne, and Maunoury, who was then falling back on Creil, had word of its route and drew the correct inference. The thing was, however, not yet proven, and it was only in the early hours of 3rd September that indisputable evidence came to Maunoury's superior, Galliéni, in Paris. For while on the 26th August Galliéni had been placed under Joffre, Maunoury's army, at the moment the garrison of Paris, was under Galliéni, and it was not till the Battle of the Ourcq developed that it passed out of the Paris command. About noon Galliéni issued a note to the garrison warning them of the apparent change in the German march, and at once communicated with Joffre. He received no reply that day, and indeed seems not to have been aware of the orders for the further retreat issued on 1st September. Next morning he took the matter into his own hands. At 9 a.m. on the 4th he warned the Sixth Army that he intended to use it for an attack on Kluck's flank, and ordered it to be ready to march that afternoon and begin the general movement next day. Then he proceeded to telephone to Joffre, who from captured maps had learned about Kluck on the evening of the 2nd, but who had to wait till the Sixth Army was disengaged, which did not happen till the 4th. At 2.50 p.m. the Commander-in-

\* For the most unfavourable view of Joffre's action see General Le Gros's *La Genèse de la Bataille de la Marne*.

Chief authorized the advance of Maunoury's army for the next day. Meantime Galliéni had received orders, issued two days before, directing the British army to go behind the Seine. Such a move would wreck his plans, so he hastened with Maunoury to the British Headquarters, from which unfortunately Sir John French was absent. The British retirement therefore could not be stayed on that day. At this most critical juncture it is obvious that the machinery of direction was difficult owing to the several semi-independent commands. But Joffre showed no indecision. His mind was made up when the news about Kluck's march was verified, and he struck as soon as the Sixth Army was ready.

During the evening of 4th September Joffre issued his first orders for battle. Dispositions were to be taken up on the 5th with a view to an attack on the 6th upon the German I. Army by the Allied armies of the left. The Sixth Army was to be ready to cross the Ourcq, "so as to attain the meridian of Meaux;" the British Army on the front Changis-Coulommiers was to move towards Montmirail; the Fifth Army, closing up slightly to the left, was to establish itself on the line Courtaçon-Esternay-Sézanne, preparatory to advancing north, with the 2nd Cavalry Corps as a link between it and the British. The rôle of the Ninth Army was defensive, protecting the right of the Fifth at the south side of the Marshes of St. Gond. Next day, the 5th, orders were issued for the Third and Fourth Armies, and Sir John French was informed by Joffre in person of the decision to halt and turn, and gladly acquiesced.

So ended the retreat from the frontiers. Compelled by a grave strategical blunder, it was carried to a successful end less by skilful generalship than by the endurance and courage of the rank and file. Indeed, there was little guiding on the part of the higher commands, and such leadership as there was came from the regimental officers. Except for the armies of Lorraine, it may fairly be said that by 5th September no French or British general had done anything to increase his reputation for talent, though many had shown a redoubtable coolness and courage. It cannot rank among the great strategic retreats in history, but it was a prelude to one of the greatest of the world's battles.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

*5th-12th September.*

**The German and Allied Dispositions—Maunoury moves—Advance of British and French Fifth Army—Kluck's Tactics—The Crisis of 9th September—German Retreat ordered—Foch's Stand at Fère-Champenoise—The Fight of the French Fourth and Third Armies—Castelnau and Dubail in Lorraine—The Causes of Victory.**

#### I.

To understand the immense and complex action or series of actions which we call the First Battle of the Marne, it is necessary to examine closely the position of the opposing armies on 5th September, when Joffre gave the general order to turn and fight. The main German forces lay in a semicircle two hundred miles wide and thirty miles deep, from Verdun to the skirts of Paris. The I. Army had its 4th Cavalry Division and 4th Reserve Corps as a flankguard west of the Ourcq, with no local reserves attached to it except a Landwehr brigade then on the Oise. South of the Marne it had the 2nd Corps astride the Grand Morin and still advancing, and the 4th Corps south of that river from Coulommiers to Chevru. Both these corps were facing the British. Further east the 3rd Corps was midway between Montmirail and Provins, and the 9th Corps near Esternay and Morsains. Marwitz's cavalry corps was in front of the 4th and 3rd Corps, facing the junction of the British and French Fifth Armies. On Kluck's left the II. Army had the 7th Corps behind its neighbour's right between Château-Thierry and Montmirail, the 10th Reserve Corps south-east of Montmirail, the 10th Corps at the west end of the St. Gond marshes, and the Guard Corps north and north-east of the marshes. East lay the III. Army, the 12th Corps a little behind, and not yet in line with Bülow's left, the 12th Reserve Corps also out of alignment north of Sommesous, and the 19th Corps between Châlons and Vitry.

On its left the IV. Army—the 8th, 8th Reserve, 18th, and 18th Reserve Corps—lay from the north-west of Vitry to the neighbourhood of Possesse on the Vitry–Ste. Menehould road. Beyond it the V. Army lay north and south in an odd curve, south of the Argonne and astride the river Aire. Its right corps, the 6th, was moving on Revigny, having come by the west side of the Argonne; the 13th Corps, coming by Ste. Menehould, had reached Triaucourt; the 16th, aiming at Bar-le-Duc, was on the Aire at Froidos; the 6th Reserve Corps was at Montfaucon; and the 5th Reserve Corps was east of the Meuse about Consenvoye, north of Verdun. The 5th Corps from Metz was on its way to attack the Meuse Heights from the east. So much for the main front. Beyond the Moselle the detached German left wing lay before Nancy. The VI. Army had a division south of Pont-à-Mousson, the 3rd Bavarian Corps just east of the forest of Champenoux, the 2nd Bavarian Corps south to the Sanon, the 21st Corps between the Meurthe and the Mortagne, and the 1st Bavarian and the 1st Reserve Bavarian Corps as supports. The VII. Army had its 14th and 14th Reserve Corps west of Baccarat, and the 15th and 15th Reserve Corps in the St. Dié valley.

Against this array the Allied front lay in concave form, from Maunoury west of the Ourcq to Sarrail bent in a coil round Verdun. Maunoury's Sixth Army, still on the 5th in process of formation, we shall examine as the battle develops. The British Army had on its left the 3rd Corps south of Crécy, the 2nd Corps in the centre, and the 1st Corps on the right, east of Rozoy. Beyond it lay the French Fifth Army—Conneau's 2nd Cavalry Corps keeping touch with the British, the 18th Corps at Provins, the 3rd Corps south-west of Esternay, the 1st Corps across the Grand Morin at Esternay, the 10th Corps a little advanced between Esternay and Sézanne. Valabrègue's group of reserve divisions was in support. The Ninth Army, under Foch, had on its left the 42nd Division, then the 9th Corps on both sides of Fère-Champenoise, with posts north of the St. Gond marshes, and the 11th Corps, with only one division so far in line, covering the Sommesous cross-roads. The Fourth Army lay south of Vitry across the upper Meuse on a front bending to the north-east. It had the 17th Corps from Sompuis to Courdemanges, the 12th Corps at Vitry, Lefebvres's Colonial Corps on its right, and the 2nd Corps extending to Sermaize. The 21st Corps, which Joffre had hoped to keep as a general reserve, was presently to be brought in on Langle's left. The Third Army had a fantastic alignment. On 5th September it had the 5th Corps north of



Revigny, the 6th Corps astride the Aire, and various reserve divisions extending the line northward to Souilly. A few scattered battalions lay in and around Verdun and on the Heights of the Meuse. In Lorraine the Second Army had a reserve division in the Moselle valley, a group of reserve divisions in front of Nancy, the 20th Corps astride the Sanon, and the 16th Corps on the Mortagne. The First Army had the 8th Corps from Gerbéviller southward, then the 13th Corps, the 14th Corps in the St. Dié valley, and scattered divisions east of the Meurthe. If we set against each part of the Allied front its immediate opponent, we shall find Maunoury and the British engaged with Kluck, Franchet d'Esperey with Kluck's left and Bülow's right and centre, Foch with Bülow's left and Hausen's right and centre, Langle with Hausen's left and the bulk of the Duke of Württemberg's army, Sarraill with the Duke of Württemberg's left corps and the Imperial Crown Prince, Castelnau with the Bavarian Crown Prince, and Dubail with Heeringen.

It will be observed that the concave arc of the Allied main front rested on 5th September on two fortified areas, Paris and Verdun; that there intervened a tract of difficult hilly country between the Meuse and Nancy; and that its detached right wing held the gateway of Lorraine. It was a situation to cause acute anxiety, for if Castelnau failed to bar the door, the whole line would be turned. But, assuming his success, the position had obvious advantages. Its hinterland was magnificently served by roads and railways, so that troops could be moved easily behind the front. The mass of the Argonne would impede the enemy's lateral communications, while his main line of supply was already desperately long, and seriously congested by the resistance of Maubeuge. The chances of outflanking were declining for him—except in Lorraine—since the sixty miles of upland between Verdun and Nancy made a large operation difficult, while Kluck at the other end was himself outflanked. Moreover, the numerical advantage was clearly with the Allies. Between Verdun and Paris the latter had now a superiority in man power equivalent to at least two first line corps.\* Yet, when all has been said, the decision to give battle involved many hazards. The enemy had reserves detained at Maubeuge and in Belgium which might at any moment arrive, and Joffre had none. The latter had skimmed his front to make new armies, and brought every trained man he could lay his hands on into the line. In

\* The usual estimate is forty-six Allied divisions to forty-one German. Kluck in his *March on Paris*, p. 162, estimates the difference as three corps—*i. e.*, six divisions.

order to weight his striking force, the Fifth and Sixth Armies, he had left certain sections very weak—Castelnau at Nancy, Sarrail at Verdun, Langle at Vitry, Foch on the Sézanne plateau. Yet it is certain that the enemy plan had always involved a breach of his centre and a turning of his right flank as well as his left, and if the enveloping movement failed a frantic effort would be made to pierce his line. Could Castelnau hold in Lorraine? Could Sarrail prevent a break into Burgundy? Above all, could Langle and Foch stand against the united assault of the Duke of Würtemberg, Hausen, and Bülow? To these questions a less bold man than the French Commander-in-Chief might well have returned a desponding answer. It is not the least of Joffre's titles to admiration that, having failed once, he had the courage a second time to stake everything on a plan where failure could not be retrieved.

As we glance down the roll of generals about to engage in the battle it is curious to note how many on both sides were to play a great part to the last day of the war. If some of the major commanders presently disappeared, few of the great names in the campaign were absent at the Marne. Among Kluck's subordinates were Linsingen, Armin, Lochow, Quast, Marwitz—names only too familiar in after years. Bülow had Einem and Eben; Hausen, Elsa and Kirchbach; the Imperial Crown Prince, Mudra; and in Lorraine was Deimling. With Maunoury, Nivelle served as a colonel of artillery. With the British Army were Haig and Cavan, Allenby and Horne. Franchet d'Esperey had Maud'huy in command of a corps, and Mangin and Pétain with divisions. Foch had Grossetti, Dubois, and Humbert; with Sarrail were Micheler and d'Urbal; with Castelnau, Balfourier and Fayolle.

In telling the tale of the Marne a day-to-day chronicle will not suffice. It is simplest to group the action under three heads: the fight of the Allied left—Maunoury, the British, and Franchet d'Esperey—in their effort to envelop the enveloper; the resistance of the Allied centre and right centre—Foch, Langle, and Sarrail—against the German attempt to pierce their front; and the stand of the Allied right—Castelnau and Dubail—against the Bavarians at Nancy. But before we turn to the record of events, the physical configuration of the theatre of the impending battle merits a brief description. Let us imagine a traveller in early September going westward from the Verdun forts. When he has left behind him the narrow vale of the Meuse he will find himself in an upland country of small pastures, diversified by narrow ravines and spinneys choked with undergrowth. He will cross the stream of the Aire

and from any rise will note to the southward the profound woodlands that sweep towards Bar-le-Duc. Presently his road will descend, and he will see before him a long, low ridge covered with dense forests—a knuckle of clay rising from the chalk of the weald. This is the forest of the Argonne, an old check to the invaders of France, for the paths are few and blind, and only two gaps carry a highroad and a railway. From some clear point in the Argonne, if he looks south-westward, he will catch, far on the horizon, the golden shimmer which tells of miles of ripening wheat. But as he looks westward he will see a plain like a petrified ocean. For forty miles to the west and for more than a hundred from north to south stretch those dreary steppes where heaths and chalky moorlands are broken by patches of crop, by shapeless coppices, and by large new plantings of little firs. It is the Champagne-Pouilleuse, the Salisbury Plain of France, on whose melancholy levels it had for a thousand years been prophesied that the Armageddon of Europe would be fought. Our traveller will cross the infant Aisne, and as he advances will see the gleam of water which marks where the Marne flows north from Burgundy. Passing that river at Châlons, he will presently have before him a long, low line of bluffs, running north and south—the eastern front of the Falaises de Champagne. Crossing the highroad from Fère-Champenoise to Rheims, he will ascend three hundred feet to what is called the plateau of Sézanne, through which the Marne runs in a deep-cut vale. He will pass tributaries coming from the south—the Grand and the Petit Morin—each, like the main river, a slow-flowing, unfordable stream, but each well provided with stone bridges and lined with woods and country houses. The plateau through which they flow is the Brie country, noted for its *fertés*, the ruins of famous donjons of the past. North of the Marne he will traverse the Valois and the Ile-de-France, a land rich in farms and orchards, till beyond the coppices he sees from some low ridge the spires of Paris.

Both sides recognized the gravity of the coming battle. On the morning of 6th September the French Generalissimo issued from the old château of Marshal Marmont at Châtillon-sur-Seine the following order to his men :—

“ At the moment when a battle is about to begin on which the salvation of the country depends, it is my duty to remind you that the time has gone for looking back. We have but one business on hand—to attack and repel the enemy. Any troops which can no longer advance will at all costs hold the ground they have won, and

allow themselves to be slain where they stand rather than give way. This is no time for faltering, and it will not be tolerated."

We possess an order issued to the German 8th Corps at Vitry :—

"The object of our long and arduous marches has been achieved. The principal French troops have been forced to accept battle after having been continually driven back. The great decision is without doubt at hand. For the welfare and honour of Germany I expect every officer and man, notwithstanding the hard and heroic fighting of the last few days, to do his duty unswervingly and to his last breath. Everything depends on the result of to-morrow."

To the levies of France Joffre's appeal came with especial solemnity, for the main battle-ground was the holy land of French arms. In the north the Allies had been fighting in places whose names were famous not less in English than in French history, but the Champagne-Pouilleuse was France's own. From its southern borders Joan of Arc had come to give heroic inspiration to her people. On one of its ridges stood the tomb of Kellermann, to mark where Valmy turned the tide of the Revolution wars. But the great monument of the past was the vast oval mound which catches the eye of the traveller on the old Roman road from Châlons. It is called the Camp of Attila, and the legend is that this uncouth thing, as strange to European eyes as the Pyramids, was a fortification of the Huns when they broke like a flood upon the West. The flood was rolled back there, on the plain of Châlons, by Aetius the Roman, and Theodoric, King of the Visigoths. Once again the Catalaunian flats were to be the arena of strife with an invader from the East.

## II.

Galliéni on 4th September had ordered Maunoury to begin his forward movement on the following day. Joffre's order of the 4th had directed Maunoury to get into position of attack on the 5th, but the 6th was fixed by him as the time for the general battle to commence. If a surprise were to be achieved, it was therefore essential that Maunoury, while deploying on the 5th, should not discover himself on that day to Kluck's rearguard.\* At noon on

\* It should be noted that no blame for this premature discovery can attach to Maunoury. He was carrying out Joffre's orders—to get into position for attack with his right near Meaux. Such a position was at the mercy of any German cavalry reconnaissance.



the 5th Lamaze's group of divisions, which had already marched nearly a hundred miles in three days and nights, moved from the south of Dammartin towards the line St. Soupplets-Monthyon. Almost at once they were under fire from the batteries of the German 4th Reserve Corps. This came as a surprise to Galliéni. Maunoury, when he started, was at least a dozen miles from the Ourcq, but it had been assumed that at the outset he would meet with no opposition, and would make such progress that, when the battle opened on the 6th, he would be able to cross the Ourcq and move on Château-Thierry. Here, however, was Kluck's flank guard far to the west of the river. For once the German reconnaissance was superior to that of the Allies. Gronau, commanding the 4th Reserve Corps, was aware of Lamaze's position at Dammartin on the 4th September, and guessed at his purpose. He sent out detachments towards St. Soupplets on the morning of the 5th, and Lamaze was detected as soon as he started. Thereupon Gronau resolved to attack to clear up the situation, and Lamaze with his weary and depleted divisions had to fight for every yard of his advance. All day the French struggled on through that rich country, where the baked white roads ran through the green of beetroot and lucerne, the yellow of mustard, the gold of ripe corn, and the scarlet of clover. They suffered heavily, but by the evening Gronau had fallen back behind the Thérouanne. Yet their front was no further than the line Montgé-Cuisy-Iverny-Charny, and the Ourcq ran ten miles beyond them. The first round had left the vital army of assault in an equivocal position, and the somewhat slender chance of surprise had gone.

Meantime the British, having in obedience to Joffre's order altered their line of retreat to the south-westward to give the French Fifth Army room, were behind the forest of Crécy, and in touch with the railway junctions south of Paris, whence they could draw their much needed reinforcements. These they received on the 5th. They had before them Kluck's right centre, the 2nd and part of the 4th Corps, and it was still advancing. That day Sir John French met Joffre at Melun, and the original instructions to move due east on the 6th were slightly modified. The British front was now to face north-east; on its right, to fill the space between it and the French Fifth Army, would be Conneau's 2nd Cavalry Corps, and on its left, towards the Marne, Galliéni was instructed to send the 8th Division of the French 4th Corps to occupy the gap. At the moment it seemed to Joffre that Maunoury would require no assistance for his march on the Ourcq. Sir John

French's action at this time was much criticized, as showing undue timidity about his flanks, and undue slowness in beginning the counterstroke; but it is to be remembered that he acted in accordance with Joffre's precise instructions, and that the French Commander-in-Chief did not dream that on the 5th his enveloping plan would be revealed to the enemy.

For on the evening of that day Kluck was fully warned. He had decided to disobey the orders of Great Headquarters, received early on the morning of the 5th, to halt and cover the northern and eastern fronts of Paris. But before evening he had news from his flankguard that strong enemy forces were advancing from Dammartin, and he had already received from Bülow tidings of an Allied concentration on the west. At the same moment there arrived from Great Headquarters Lieut.-Colonel Hentsch\* with the disquieting intelligence that the French had been withdrawing troops from the centre and right, and that things were going ill on the east of the line. Kluck did not take long to make up his mind. With admirable promptness he revised his whole plan of campaign. At 11 p.m. that night he ordered his 2nd and 4th Corps back, and at 3 on the morning of the 6th the 2nd Corps, which lay between the Marne and the Grand Morin, marched to recross the former stream in order to support his rearguard. Seven hours before the beginning of the Allied concentration which was to be a surprise envelopment Kluck had realized his peril and taken steps to meet it.

The 6th, the great day, dawned, and Maunoury's Sixth Army advanced with hope and resolution. It had now the 7th Corps under Vautier in line on Lamaze's left, and it believed that it had no more than one German corps and one cavalry division against it. At first it seemed to be succeeding. St. Souplets was taken, and the line of the Théroouanne stream reached and crossed; the Monthyon ridge followed; and by the afternoon Maunoury's left was facing the Bouillancy-Puisieux ridge and his right the hills around Etrépilly, about five miles from the Ourcq. But suddenly he found the enemy's resistance stiffen. There was more than the 4th Reserve Corps before him. A division of the 2nd Corps had arrived to support the German right about Trocy, and another to strengthen the left at Varredes. Maunoury's advance came to a standstill.

That morning the British army began its forward march. The change of direction had put it in high spirits, but it believed that it

\* He was Chief of the Information Section at Great Headquarters.

had a severe task before it, no less than the stemming of the tide of the bulk of Kluck's forces. On its left was the 3rd Corps under Pulteney—the 4th Division and the 19th Brigade; in its centre Smith-Dorrien's 2nd Corps; and Haig with the 1st Corps on the right. At first it appeared that it would have to struggle hard to advance. Haig had to repel an attack by the rearguard of the German 4th Corps, now under orders for the Ourcq front. But by noon of that blistering day, when our men had left the cool shades of the forest and entered open country, it became clear that they were only contending with rearguards and Marwitz's cavalry. The German 2nd Corps had gone, and that morning at 5.30 the 4th Corps moved to recross the Marne. That night the British had reached the Grand Morin from Crécy eastward, and had outposts beyond it. Meantime the Fifth Army had also advanced. It had before it Kluck's two corps of his left, the 3rd and the 9th, and the 7th and 10th Reserve Corps of Bülow's right. At first it met with a stout resistance, for Bülow had no Maunoury to deal with, and the German position was strong on the two Morins. Conneau's cavalry occupied Courtaçon, the 18th and 3rd Corps carried the villages on the Paris-Nancy highroad which were the key of the German centre, and the 1st Corps, after a stubborn battle, drove the enemy from Châtillon-sur-Morin and came to the skirts of Esternay. The day was one of small and hard-won successes, but the reports of the Allied airmen gave ground for encouragement. Something very odd was happening to Kluck and the I. Army.

The whole German plan was in process of revision, and the chief revisor seems to have been the masterful Kluck. The old enveloping scheme was now impossible, but another had revealed itself. Kluck would turn and deal with Maunoury, outflank him on the right and drive him back on Paris. His left and Bülow's right, assisted by Marwitz's cavalry, would hold off the British and Franchet d'Esperey, and for this purpose that evening he handed over to Bülow his left corps, the 3rd and 9th. Meantime the German centre—Bülow's left, Hausen, the Duke of Würtemberg, and the Imperial Crown Prince—would drive furiously against Foch, Langle, and Sarrail, while the Bavarians broke Castelnau at Nancy. If the Allied centre could be routed, the decisive battle would have been won, for French and Franchet d'Esperey would be penned between Paris and the victorious Germans wheeling to the right. The plan involved one immense hazard. Bülow and Kluck would be operating in different directions, one to the south-

east and the other to the north-west, and every hour they would feel the "effet de ventouse" and tend to draw further apart. Could the void be filled sufficiently to keep French and Franchet d'Esperey at arm's length? Apart from the postulated success of the German centre, two things were needed for victory—the holding back of the British and the French Fifth Army, and the complete destruction of Maunoury.

His ultimate failure cannot lessen our admiration for the way in which Kluck coped with a shattering crisis. No soldier will deny his tribute of praise to the skill shown in bringing back the German corps across the Marne. On the morning of the 7th Maunoury was faced with the task of a frontal attack on the three plateaus of Varreddes, Trocy, and Etavigny, which were separated by the ravines of the Thérouanne and Gergogne streams flowing east to the Ourcq. He had no heavy artillery and no airplanes, and so was at the mercy of the concealed German batteries. The day was one long and desperate battle. Kluck's flank guard was under the general command of Linsingen, and was disposed in three groups: the right under Armin, the centre under Gronau, and the left under Trossel—a necessary arrangement, since units had to be thrown into the fight as they arrived from south of the Marne. There were now available the 2nd, 4th, and 4th Reserve Corps, and at 11.15 a.m. Kluck asked back from Bülow his 3rd and 9th Corps for use on the Ourcq. So grave did he consider the position that he ordered his headquarters guard to be ready to go in. Maunoury had Lamaze's group of divisions and Vautier's 7th Corps, and next day he got the 45th Algerian Division and the much-reduced 61st Reserve Division. Both the combatant armies were therefore growing, and it was a race between them which should grow the faster. That day the 45th Division reached Barcy, and early in the night under a harvest moon entered Etrépilly. The 7th Corps took Etavigny, but was driven back by the arrival of part of the German 2nd Corps, and Maunoury's left was only saved by Colonel Nivelles's handling of his five field batteries. But the Trocy plateau was still unwon, and it became clear that Linsingen was extending his right with a view to envelopment. Maunoury duly extended his left, but he had nothing to put in there except the 61st Reserve Division and Sordet's 1st Cavalry Corps. That evening the French Sixth Army, as it clung to the skirts of the blazing hills, might well have viewed the future with dismay. It was the anvil for the hammer, and it could not see the thrust which was to cripple the hammer-arm.



Meantime all went well with the British and the French Fifth Army. During the night of the 6th the former had taken Coullommiers, and, starting at 5 a.m. on the 7th, carried the line of the Grand Morin and pressed on to the Petit Morin. They were opposed by Marwitz supported by infantry and heavy artillery. By noon, however, he gave way under the pressure of Allenby's cavalry—forty-five British squadrons routed seventy-two German—and by that evening the British 3rd and 2nd Corps were well beyond the Grand Morin, between La Trétoire and the junction with the Marne. This advance and the fact that Kluck's 3rd and 9th Corps had gone north cleared the ground for Franchet d'Esperey's left wing—fortunately for him, for that day he had to send a division to Foch's assistance. He marched fast through the forest of Gault, and by the evening was for the most part across the Grand Morin, with his van approaching Montmirail.

That night it was clear that Maunoury was in imminent danger of defeat unless he could find reinforcements. Some were arriving. The remaining half of the 4th Corps, the 7th Division (the 8th had already been sent south of the Marne to link up with the British), detrained that afternoon in Paris. It was at once dispatched to Betz on Maunoury's extreme left, and since the need was urgent half of it covered the 40 miles in Paris taxi-cabs. At dawn on the 8th it was in its place, and not an hour too soon. For that day the 3rd Corps was extending the German right, and the 9th Corps was following it northward. Maunoury attacked on his wings, but in spite of desperate efforts failed to make way. The enemy occupied Betz, and bent back the French left between Nantheuil-le-Haudouin and Bouillancy. The 62nd Reserve Division, the last unit left in Paris, was sent out to organize a position to which the Sixth Army could fall back in case of need. The old game had been played and once again the enveloper had become the enveloped. Galliéni did his best to alarm Kluck about his communications. He sent out a detachment of Zouaves in motor cars to make a raid towards Senlis and Creil, and Bridoux, who had now succeeded Sordet, dispatched the 5th Cavalry Division on a wild ride into the Villers-Cotterets woods.\* But such devices did not touch the heart of the problem. Maunoury and his men were at the very limit of their strength.

But French and Franchet d'Esperey were moving fast, and the gap between Kluck and Bülow was widening. The British reached

\* For this episode see Hethay's *Le Rôle de la Cavalerie Française à l'Aile Gauche de la première bataille de la Marne*, 1919, and Kluck's *March on Paris*, p. 133.

and crossed the Petit Morin, after Haig had been in action at La Trétoire and Smith-Dorrien had had a stiff fight at Orly. This meant that our left, the 3rd Corps, now rested on the Marne at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, where it was in touch with Kluck's left on the Ourcq. Franchet d'Esperey, further up the wooded glen of the Petit Morin, took Montmirail in the late afternoon, and before the dark fell was well on the road to Château-Thierry. That evening the weather broke. The brilliant starry night changed to showers of rain which continued through the following day. The position of the German armies had become irregular in the extreme. Kluck, wholly north of the Marne, was rapidly lengthening his line to the north; Bülow, driving on with his left, was drawing back his right before Franchet d'Esperey's attack. From Lizy-sur-Ourcq to Condé-en-Brie stretched a gap of thirty miles occupied by nothing save Marwitz's horse; and right athwart this gap, about to cross the Marne, were the British and French Fifth Armies. If Maunoury could endure for twelve hours more his opponent must retire or be destroyed.

Wednesday, 9th September, a day of rain and high winds, was everywhere the crisis of the battle. For Maunoury it seemed that the crisis had passed and that he was beaten. He was heavily outnumbered and had no reserves except the 8th Division, which he now summoned from the south bank of the Marne, but too late to avert disaster. His troops were hungry, ragged, parched with thirst, and bone-weary. He was still five miles from the Ourcq and his left was virtually turned. Galliéni could not send him another man. Early on the 9th the enemy right attacked and carried Villers-St.-Genest and Nantheuil, so that the French left was back at Silly-le-Long, not far from its starting-point four days earlier. For a moment it looked as if all was over, and Kluck would soon be hammering at the gates of Paris.

Suddenly there came strange news from the front line. Betz had been evacuated by the enemy! From the other end it was reported that Varreddes and Etrépilly were empty. Very cautiously the 4th Corps crept forward; the Germans were still at Nantheuil and Etavigny; but reports came from airmen that long enemy convoys were moving on all the roads to the north. But the centre still held east of Etrépilly and Puisieux! Maunoury's weary forces could only look on and wonder. Had he had two fresh divisions he might have made an end of Kluck. It was not till next morning that the situation was plain, and by that time the retreat had been in progress for twenty hours. The Sixth Army

by its endurance on the Ourcq had enabled the Allies to win the Battle of the Marne. It well deserved the message which Maunoury issued that day: "Comrades! The Commander-in-Chief asked you in the name of your Fatherland to do more than your duty: you have responded to his appeal beyond the limits of human possibility. . . . If I have done any service I have been repaid by the greatest honour that has been granted me in a long career, that of commanding such men as you."

The eleventh hour salvation of the Sixth Army was due to the doings on the 9th of the Fifth Army and the British. Franchet d'Esperey, whose army seemed to gather momentum with each mile it advanced, was driving Bülow's right before him like a flock before a shepherd. He had to send his 10th, and later his 1st Corps, to support Foch, but these losses did not lessen his impetus. On his left Conneau's cavalry crossed the Marne at Azy and struck at Bülow's flank; the 18th Corps marched on Château-Thierry, which fell in the evening; the 3rd occupied Montigny. Bülow's right corps, the 7th, was so severely handled that it fell back in something like disorder. The gap between the German I. and II. Armies threatened to turn from a fissure to a chasm. Presently there would be forty miles of unprotected flank on which Bülow would invite attack. In the evening Franchet d'Esperey issued his famous order to the Fifth Army:—

"Soldiers! On the historic fields of Montmirail, Vauchamps, and Champaubert, which a hundred years ago witnessed the victories of our ancestors over Blücher's Prussians, our vigorous offensive has triumphed over the resistance of the Germans. Harried on his flanks, broken in his centre, the enemy is now retreating east and north by forced marches. The finest corps of Old Prussia, the contingents of Westphalia, Hanover, and Brandenburg have fallen back in haste before you. But this initial success is only a prelude. The enemy is shaken but not decisively beaten. You will still have to endure great hardships, to make long marches, and to fight hard battles. May the image of your country, soiled by barbarians, be ever before your eyes!"

Straight through the ever-widening gap and against Kluck's flank and rear the British were marching. In their haste the Germans had failed to blow up the Marne bridges west of Château-Thierry, except those at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre. They might have disputed the crossing, for the river runs in a deep trench, and the wooded bluffs on the north bank command all the approaches from the south. But on the river line there was little resistance. The 3rd Corps on the left was hung up most of the day at La Ferté-

sous-Jouarre by the broken bridge, and the 1st Corps on the right by a threat of attack from Château-Thierry, which was still held by the enemy. But in the morning the British centre, the 2nd Corps, crossed with ease, and by 8 a.m. was four miles to the north on the Château-Thierry-Lizy road, directly in rear of Kluck's left flank. The delay of the 3rd and 1st Corps enabled Kluck to improvise a temporary defence across the loop of the Marne between Lizy and Château-Thierry. Two divisions of Marwitz's cavalry were in the gap, and about 11 a.m. Kluck sent the 5th Infantry Division from Trocy, with the support of some of his heavy artillery, and borrowed Richthofen's cavalry from Bülow. The screen was never seriously attacked by the British owing to the delay to their 3rd and 1st Corps. Marwitz fell back in the evening to the line of the Clignon stream, and presently Sir John French heard from his airmen that the Germans were evacuating the whole angle between Ourcq and Marne. Kluck had at last given the order for retreat.

What was the news which finally convinced the stubborn general of the I. Army? His own narrative traces the stages of his conversion. About 11 a.m., he says, he heard from Marwitz that part of the British had crossed the Marne. According to his account he was not alarmed. He was succeeding famously on his right, and by slightly swinging back his left and sending reinforcements to Marwitz, he hoped to stave off the danger till Maunoury was crushed. But before 1 p.m. he received a message from the II. Army that it had begun the retreat. Franchet d'Esperey's handling of Bülow's 7th Corps had convinced that commander that his position was desperate. Simultaneously Colonel Hentsch, the plenipotentiary of Great Headquarters, arrived from Bülow, and informed Kluck's staff that all the armies must fall back. The I. Army must retire at once to the line Soissons-Fère-en-Tardenois, perhaps even to that of Laon-La Fère. These were the instructions of the Supreme Command, and Kluck had no choice but to obey. At 2 p.m. he gave the orders for a retreat towards the Aisne. Such is his own account, but it is not possible wholly to accept it, for a general looking back at an unpleasant decision is apt unwittingly to post-date it. It seems certain, judging by the early evacuation of Betz and Varreddes, and the early hour when his transport took the road, that by 11 a.m. Kluck had decided that the game was lost, and that any fighting thereafter was in the strictest sense a rearguard action. This decision can only have been caused by the news that by 9 a.m. part of the British 2nd Corps was four miles north of the Marne. Bülow and Hentsch, in their repre-



sentations after midday, were forcing an open door. As Franchet d'Esperey convinced Bülow, so Sir John French convinced Kluck that there was no alternative to retreat.\*

By midday on the 9th the left wing of the Allies had won an indisputable victory. But the situation was fantastic, for their centre was still hard pressed and on the verge of breaking. We turn now to the doings of Foch, Langle, and Sarrail.

### III.

So soon as Kluck was compelled to turn about to face Maunoury, the German plan, if a decisive battle were to be fought, had for its most vital offensive movement the breach of the French centre, and the success of the Allied left wing increased the burden on Foch. On 5th September the French Ninth Army was in that portion of the Champagne-Pouilleuse which lies between the sharp edge of the Brie plateau in the west and the Troyes-Châlons road in the east. The battlefield was open, the plateau of Sézanne falling gently eastward toward the upper Marne. It contained, however, one curious feature. In the chalky soil of the plateau lies a pocket of clay, ten miles long from east to west, and of a breadth varying from one to two miles. Through that pocket flows the Petit Morin, now a very small stream; indeed, here lay its springs, and it and its affluents had been canalized to prevent flooding. The place was called the Marshes of St. Gond; they were now almost wholly reclaimed, and between the acres of rank grass the various rivulets ran in deep ditches, as in any marshy English meadow. In fine weather the ground was dry enough, but in heavy rains the slopes to north and south sent down trickles of water, the canalized streams overflowed, and the clay soil of the pocket became a quagmire. The Marshes were crossed at each end by two notable highways, leading respectively from Sézanne to Epernay and from Fère-Champenoise to Mareuil. Between these roads four country tracks crossed the bog, none of them engineered or metalled, and likely in flood time to become as deep in mire as the adjoining marshes. The place had played its part in the 1814 campaign, and was obviously of high strategic

\* This view is confirmed by the account of the military inquiry in 1917 into Hentsch's conduct, published in the *Militär Wochenblatt*, September 1920, from which it appears that (1) there was a panic behind that part of the I. Army opposed to the British; (2) von Kuhl, Kluck's Chief of Staff, thought retirement inevitable; and (3) Kluck's left wing had been ordered back—all before Hentsch's arrival at I. Army Headquarters.

importance. The swamp formed a natural barrier against the German advance, and the western road across it was commanded on the south by the hill of Mondement, the eastern by Mont Août.

On 5th September, after Foch received from Joffre the order to stand, he had his left, the 42nd Division, on the hills between Soisy and Mondement; his centre, Dubois' 9th Corps, just south of the Marshes, with two battalions pushed beyond them; his right, Eydoux's 11th Corps, from the east end of the Marshes to Sommesous, with a cavalry division covering the gap between him and Langle. He had against him Bülow's left, and almost the whole of Hausen's III. Army, and besides being outnumbered, was conspicuously inferior in artillery. His position was uneasy, for on his right lay a gap which Hausen might well pierce, and he could not strengthen this in the face of Bülow's thrust against his left. He was compelled to pivot on the Sézanne position and defend that plateau to the last, trusting to fortune that the enemy would not detect the dangerous gap about Sommesous.

When the battle opened on the 6th, he had to meet the attack of Bülow's right on the Marshes. His own left centre, the advanced units of the 9th Corps, was speedily driven south of the Marshes, and evening found Dubois at Mont Août, with the Prussian Guard at Bannes, though small French detachments still clung to Morains and Aulnay. His left held at Soisy, but his right was in trouble at Ecurie and Normée, and just managed to cling to Sommesous. It was plain that the part of the Ninth Army in the battle was to be that of a desperate defence.

On the 7th the 42nd Division, which was helped by Franchet d'Esperey's advance, yielded nothing. But Humbert's 1st Moroccan Division on their right had a fierce struggle with the German 10th Corps around Mondement. "The Germans are bottled up," Humbert told his men, "and Mondement is the cork; we must never let it go." The place was held that day, but only by the narrowest margin. Further east Morains and Aulnay were lost, and Aulnizeux followed in the evening. The enemy that day had cleared the St. Gond Marshes, and prepared the way for an attack by both his wings. This came before dawn on the 8th, but at first things went well for the French in the west. The 42nd and Moroccan Divisions counter-attacked, and took Oyes and Soisy. But in the east the assault of the Prussian Guard and the 12th Saxon Corps on the French 11th Corps came very near to a breakthrough. Lenharrée was early lost, Sommesous followed, and the broken line was forced back, till at 10.30 a.m. the Prussian Guard entered Fère-

Champenoise. There was much gallant fighting by rearguards, but by the evening the enemy was four or five miles south of Fère-Champenoise, and further east was in Mailly, and the whole of Foch's right was in fragments. This disaster reacted on his left and centre. The 42nd Division lent a regiment as support to Dubois, and presently it and the Moroccans had to relinquish all their morning's gain. Humbert, however, clung to Mondement, though he had but a single battalion in reserve, and the heavy rain which began in the evening helped the defence. The centre, Dubois's 9th Corps, found its flanks turned by the defeat of the right wing, but it managed to form an irregular front facing east and covering Puits and Mont Août. In the afternoon there were further losses, but the 11th Corps rallied sufficiently to occupy a line in the Maurienne valley from Corroy to Semoine.

Foch was aware that at any moment might come the crisis of the battle. He had only to hold, and Franchet d'Esperey, French, and Maunoury would do his business for him further west. That day, when his centre and right had been broken on a front of ten miles, he had reported that the situation was excellent and that he was about to attack. It was not bravado. It was a reasoned decision on sound data by a consummate master of war. He saw that the German armies were being sucked apart, and that at any moment the attack would itself split into gaps; and though his own army had been driven back in three days of desperate battle, he prepared to take the offensive. He would strike with his last strength at the decisive moment and in a decisive place, and that place must be the new German flank, eight miles long, between Mont Août and Corroy—for a thrust which does not wholly succeed offers a vulnerable flank. Where could he get his striking force? Eydoux and Dubois could give him nothing. There remained only his extreme left, Grossetti's 42nd Division. To take its place he borrowed the 51st Division from Franchet d'Esperey.

But when the wet dawn broke on the 9th an offensive seemed the wildest folly. For at 3 a.m. Mondement fell. Humbert counter-attacked and failed. But the place must be retaken, or the left of the Ninth Army would be swept off its pivot on the Sézanne plateau. Humbert borrowed Grossetti's artillery and got back the 77th Regiment, which he had lent to Dubois, and at 2.30 p.m. advanced to the attack. At 3.30 he had again failed. At 6 p.m. came the final effort, and before 7 p.m. the château was in French hands. The "last ounce of resolution" had won. That was for the left, but things were very desperate in

the centre. At 5 a.m. Bülow and Hausen mustered all their strength and hurled the Prussian Guard and the two Saxon Corps against Dubois and Eydoux. The Corroy position fell, Mont Aoùt fell, and for hours the line resolved itself into a precarious struggle of oddments of infantry and cavalry wherever there seemed a chance for a stand. The whole of the centre and right had decomposed under the assault. But Foch was adamant. He would still attack, and with the 42nd Division, which since 8.30 a.m. had been marching eastward behind the rear. He was convinced that the enemy had reached the extreme limit of fatigue, and that victory would still fall to the last ounce of resolution.

The Germans, after a night's revel in Fère-Champenoise, pushed on steadily during the day, and by 1 p.m. the Guard was in Connantre and the Saxons in Gourgançon. It was Foch's plan that the 42nd Division should attack their flank between Linthes and Pleurs, along the highway to Fère-Champenoise. Dubois was to do what he could on the left, and Eydoux was to rally from the south. About 6 p.m., while the sky was clearing after the rain to a red sunset, the 42nd Division arrived. But it was not needed. Only the 9th Corps, of all the contemplated offensive, went into action, and then only in a rearguard skirmish. For that day, about noon, Bülow had made up his mind to fall back, and Colonel Hentsch was ordering the retreat of all the German armies. The orders must have been issued from the different headquarters before 3 p.m. By 5.30 Fère-Champenoise was full of German troops hurrying north from Connantre and Gourgançon. The long anguish of the Ninth Army was over.

Ever since the month of the battle legend has been busy with Foch's performance. The march of the 42nd Division has become a saga. Human nature longs to simplify and to find the culminating drama in some small thing—the heroism of one man, the sudden inspiration of a single general, the intervention of a solitary unit against impossible odds. It has been held that the 42nd Division struck the blow which compelled the enemy's retreat. But the facts do not support this gallant romance, for the 42nd Division was never in action before the retirement. Yet its march was a great achievement, and it may well be maintained that had the orders to retreat not been already issued the 42nd Division would have compelled them. Bülow and Hausen escaped only just in time. Beyond doubt Foch's stubborn defence was one of the main causes of the Allied victory, for it defeated the alternative German plan. Had he yielded on the 6th or 7th, Franchet



d'Esperey and the British would have been gravely compromised. For sheer magnificence of stubborn heroism the fight of the Ninth Army must remain unsurpassed in any campaign, and the last retaking of Mondement by Humbert and the march of the weary and dazed 42nd on what seemed a hopeless venture will live for ever as proof of what may be endured and dared by the spirit of man.

As we move eastward in the battle-line the struggle is slower to reach a decision. The fight of the French Fourth and Third Armies had no help from any outflanking movement, nor were the enemy forces opposed to them being sucked apart as were Bülow and Hausen before Foch. Their actions were stubborn pieces of stonewalling against an antagonist slightly superior in numbers. Had Langle given way at any time before the 9th the Marne would have been a lost battle, and had Sarrail failed the whole salient of the Meuse would have gone to the enemy. On the night of 5th September Langle had his 17th Corps facing Hausen's left, the Saxon 19th Corps, just east of the Camp of Mailly; his centre, the Colonial Corps, against the 8th and 8th Reserve Corps of Duke Albrecht south of Vitry; and his right, the 2nd Corps, flung forward against the German 18th Corps north of the Ornain. He was aiming in conjunction with Sarrail at an outflanking movement to press Duke Albrecht and the Imperial Crown Prince westward after the fashion of Maunoury's movement on the Ourcq. On the 6th, the 17th Corps made a slight advance west of Courdemanges, but the centre was driven back and all but separated from the right wing. That right wing in the afternoon was forced south of the Ornain, and next day, the 7th, the Germans were in Etrepy and Sermaize.

For a moment it looked as if Langle's two flanks were to be turned. Only just in time arrived two corps of the reserve, the 13th, which filled the gap between him and Sarrail, and the 21st, which extended his left. The chief danger lay on the right, where the Allied front made a right angle, and where a break through would sever for good Sarrail and Langle. The enemy, having crossed the Ornain, had reached the wooded plateau of Trois-Fontaines and was aiming at St. Dizier. On the 8th he was in Pargny and Maurupt, but meantime the 15th Corps had arrived and threatened the flank of any further German advance. That day there was a desperate battle in the centre around Mont Moret, and the French left clung to its position till the first troops of the 21st Corps could arrive. They came that evening, and next day, the 9th,

attacked the Saxon left and drove it back to Sommesous. That was the end of Hausen, for on the 10th he was in full retreat before Foch and Langle.

Sarrail had a still more difficult task. He was opposed to the Imperial Crown Prince, who was now some twenty-five miles southwest of Verdun, and his front, which faced east and north, had behind it the Heights of the Meuse, which were threatened by an attack from Metz. He saw more clearly than the Commander-in-Chief the importance of Verdun, and resolved to keep in touch with that fortress so long as he dared, even though he might thereby lose contact with Langle. On the morning of the 6th he had his left, the 5th Corps, facing Duke Albrecht's left and the Crown Prince's 6th Corps at Revigny; his centre, the 6th Corps, against the German 13th Corps astride the Aire; and the group of divisions on his right along the Verdun-Bar-le-Duc highroad against the German 16th and 6th Reserve Corps. The Imperial Crown Prince was aiming at Bar-le-Duc, and his cavalry had orders to ride for the line Dijon-Besançon-Belfort—a proof that the German V. Army believed itself on the verge of a dramatic success. But on the 6th he found his centre held, and the communications of his left threatened, though his right in conjunction with Württemberg had gravely compromised Sarrail's left, and had taken Revigny. On the 7th the struggle was intense, but that evening the arrival of a division of the 15th Corps from Lorraine eased the situation on the left. D'Urbal had been sent with his cavalry to that flank, when he was suddenly recalled, for the position on the eastern bank of the Meuse had become critical. About noon on the 7th part of the 5th Corps from Metz arrived and began the bombardment of Fort Troyon, which commanded the Gap of Spada. In twenty-four hours 400 heavy shells were thrown into the place, and seven of its guns were put out of action. Sarrail had no reserves, and, while his left was being enveloped, it looked as if his right might any moment be taken in the rear.

On the evening of the 8th Joffre directed Sarrail to fall back from Verdun to the west bank of the Meuse. But the stout-hearted commander of the Third Army did not act on this authority. By 11 on the morning of the 9th Troyon had not a gun left in action, the thin screen around Verdun seemed about to dissolve, while the centre was shaking under the assaults of the German 13th and 16th Corps. That night came the news that Kluck was in retreat before the British and Franchet d'Esperey, Bülow before Foch, and Hausen before Langle. On the 10th Sarrail's left ad-

vanced, but the struggle in the centre and on the right continued, and in the evening the first steps were taken for the abandonment of Verdun. But, though Sarrail did not know it, the Imperial Crown Prince was already in retreat. His right was swinging back towards the Argonne, and on the night of the 12th his centre and left followed. Troyon, now little more than a shell, was saved.

#### IV.

It remains to chronicle the stand of the detached Allied right wing in Lorraine. We have seen that Dubail and Castelnau had secured the Gap of Charmes and now faced the enemy on the strong ground between Pont-à-Mousson and the northern spurs of the Vosges. Their task was to remain on the defensive, and for this the simplest position might well have seemed to be the difficult banks of the Moselle, Meurthe, and Mortagne, with Toul and Epinal behind them. But Castelnau, who had long foreseen some such situation as this, had planned otherwise. A scion of an ancient and famous house, and a man so liberal in mind that, though himself a devout Catholic, his two principal assistants were a Protestant and a free-thinker, he represented a rare union of new and old, of military science and fighting ardour. He saw the value of Nancy, and clung to it as Sarrail clung to Verdun. He took up position on the eastern half-moon of hills, the Grand Couronné, the two tips of which, the hill of Amance in the north and the Rambétant ridge in the south, enclosed the woody plateau of Champenoux. Thence his left was extended by the Moselle heights, and on the south beyond the Sanon lay an intricate land of wood and river up to the Vosges buttresses. No stronger position for defence could be found on the frontier.

The French First and Second Armies had been skimmed to form Joffre's reserve. Castelnau had surrendered the 18th, 9th, 15th, and 2nd Cavalry Corps; Dubail the 21st and, presently, the 13th Corps. On the 4th September the former had the 73rd Reserve Division withdrawn on his left flank near Pont-à-Mousson; a group of divisions, including the 70th under Fayolle, in front of Nancy; Balfourier's 20th Corps on the right of the Grand Couronné across the Sanon; and the 16th Corps on the Mortagne. Dubail, with the 8th, 13th, and 14th Corps and several divisions, lay from Gerbéviller to south of St. Dié. The German VI. and VII. Armies considerably outnumbered the French, for they had just received very large accretions from the Ersatz and Landwehr.

The enemy plan was for Heeringen to pin Dubail down, and then transfer forces to the centre for Prince Rupprecht's assault on Nancy. This was the first stage in the battle, and on 4th September, when the main action began, Dubail had resisted the enemy attempts to break west from the valley of the upper Meurthe. The engagement spread to Castelnau's right, but by the 6th the first stage was finished, for Heeringen had begun to move the bulk of his troops to Prince Rupprecht and was himself under orders for the Aisne. Dubail had also to surrender his 13th Corps and remain inactive, watching the passes. For the combat was now joined before Nancy.

The Bavarian bombardment began there on the afternoon of the 4th. The French centre, the 20th Corps, held firm under the infantry attacks which presently revealed themselves as an attempt to break through between the horns of the Grand Couronné and at the same time envelop the northern wing by an attack of the Metz troops up the Moselle valley. All night the battle raged furiously, the Bavarians pushed up the gullies and woodland paths, and by the morning the whole front between the Champenoux forest and the Rambétant had been pressed back. Further south the 16th Corps was driven to the left bank of the Mortagne, and the enemy crossed below Gerbéviller. This danger, however, was checked on the 5th, and on the 6th the 16th Corps recrossed the river and retook Gerbéviller. But early on the 5th the Bavarians reached the foot of Amance hill, and by the evening the 20th Corps had lost half of the southern horn of the Grand Couronné. That afternoon, too, the blow fell in the north. The German 33rd Reserve Division came down on Ste. Geneviève in the loop of the Moselle, and next day, the 6th, was only six miles from Nancy at Marbache and eight miles from Toul at Saizerais.

On the 7th came the crisis. The Bavarians concentrated their efforts on breaking the French centre by way of Amance and the little Amezule glen. After a violent bombardment ten battalions rushed the gap, and by midday Prince Rupprecht had the Champenoux plateau. But Amance held, and under the fire of the French guns the enemy's threat was stayed on its slopes. Moreover, the French posts on the Ste. Geneviève spur had delayed the advance of the Metz troops, and Castelnau was able to send reinforcements to that quarter.\* All day on the 8th the struggle

\* On this day the orders were actually written for the evacuation of Nancy, owing to the belief that the Ste. Geneviève spur was lost. See Dubail's account in his *Quatre Années de Commandement*, Vol. I. (1920).





**THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE MARNE.**  
 (Situation on the morning of Sept. 9, 1914.)  
 (Facing p. 232.)



THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

(Position on the morning of Sept. 8, 1914.)

Scale 1:50,000

continued among the woody hills till the enemy impetus began to weaken. The proof of failure came that evening when in the chagrin of disappointment the German guns threw eighty shells into Nancy. On the 9th the reaction began, and by the night of the 10th the Bavarians were in retreat. Pont-à-Mousson, Réméréville, Lunéville, Baccarat, St. Dié passed again into French hands : Castelnau by the narrowest of margins had barred the gate of the east.

For a little the German Emperor had viewed the fight at Nancy from a hill near Moncel. We shall see him again, in his grey cloak and spiked helmet, watching the menace of the Russians from a Polish castle, or looking at the desperate charge of his volunteers among the wet fields of Flanders. He flits restlessly between east and west, everywhere making brave speeches, everywhere announcing a speedy and final triumph. A melancholy figure he cuts, as he stands on the fringe of the battle-smoke at Nancy, looking west to Burgundy and that promised land which he could not enter. An object for pity, perhaps, rather than commination, for he is the dreamer whose dreams do not come true, and who in his folly has imagined that his caprices are the ordinations of destiny.

## V.

The First Battle of the Marne ranks by common consent as the greatest, because the most significant, contest of the war. In one sense it was not decisive ; it did not destroy one of the combatant forces like Jena, or make peace inevitable like Sadowa and Solferino. The German losses were not overwhelming ; they kept their armies in being, and were able to make a masterly retirement. But it was decisive in another sense ; for it meant the defeat of the first German plan of campaign, and it utterly transformed the strategical situation. The avalanche designed to crush French resistance in a month had failed of its purpose. The " battle without a morrow " had gone beyond hope ; the battle had been fought and the morrow was come. Thereafter Germany was compelled to accept a slow war of entrenchments which was repugnant to all her theories, and every week brought her nearer to the position of a beleaguered city.

She failed, as Marmont failed at Salamanca, because she left a perilous gap in her front, and that gap was due, as we have seen, less to any blunders of individual generals than to the defects in-

herent in her whole strategy of envelopment. The scheme was over-ambitious, and broke down because it demanded the impossible. It asked too much of her overworked troops, and it placed a burden of co-ordination and control on Great Headquarters which they could not sustain. Tactically, when the battle was joined, her commanders made few mistakes.\* It has been for long the fashion to dispute as to which movement on the Allied side was the main cause of victory. Human nature, as we have seen, in its quest for drama loves to simplify—but this instinct is less historical than literary, and modern battles are not won by the *beau geste*. The *causa causans* of victory was Joffre's plan, the Fabian strategy which, in spite of many blunders, was resolved to delay till it found a favourable terrain, a better balance of strength, and the chance of the strategic initiative. The proximate cause was Maunoury's flank attack, inspired by Galliéni, which halted Kluck and opened the way for the British and Franchet d'Esperey. But without the heroic offensive-defensive of Foch, and the stubborn endurance of Langle and Sarrail—above all, without Castelnau's epic resistance at Nancy—the initiative could not have been seized in the West, and the Marne would have realized Kluck's hopes. In the far-flung contest every army of the Allies did its appointed task and earned a share in the triumph. It was the ultimate battle of the old régime of war, a battle of movement, surprise, improvisation; which is to say, it was fought and won less by the machine than by the human quality of the soldier. In the last resort the giver of victory was the ancient and unconquerable spirit of France.

\* The only serious mistakes seem to have been that Hausen did not realize the gap between Foch and Langle, and that the Imperial Crown Prince failed to recognize till it was too late the weakness of the junction of Langle and Sarrail.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE OCCUPATION OF BELGIUM.

The Overrunning of Belgium—German Breaches of the Laws of War—The "Armed Dogma"—Belgium and her King.

As the Allied armies moved forward after the Marne they came for the first time into a countryside ravaged by war, and learned the ways of the would-be conquerors. Everywhere the tale was the same—among the farms of the Valois and the orchards of the Marne, in the skirts of Champagne, in the Meuse uplands, in the Lorraine towns, and throughout the villages which nestled in the Vosges glens. It was a tale of horrors which revealed a new thing in war, and to read the full text of it we must return to Belgium.

The surge of the great armies southward on 24th August left Belgium in the hands of the invaders, with the exception of the city of Antwerp, Ostend and the coast, and a portion of West Flanders. There is a passage in the Book of Deuteronomy which was quoted at the time by a German newspaper as an encouraging precedent for the doings of a modern Israel :—

" And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land : I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat ; and give me water for money, that I may drink . . . But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him : for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee : begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land. ¶Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the Lord our God delivered him before us ; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain : only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took."

That Belgium should share the fate of the cities of Heshbon

was no part of the original German plan. The Emperor and his advisers had sincerely hoped that she would for due consideration sell Germany the right of passage. Had she done that, we may be certain that the march through Belgium would have been a miracle of decorum, that every bushel of oats and peck of flour would have been paid for in cash, and that not a door-knob would have been damaged. German discipline was marvellously perfect when discipline was desired. Failing the right of entry, the German leaders believed that the complete repulse of the Belgian forces, the occupation of her capital, and the sight of the omnipotent German armies would awe her into an abject, if sullen, submission. Belgium would no doubt fall to Germany when the war was over, and this sleek and mercantile little people, the *commis voyageurs* of Europe, would not quarrel with their future bread and butter. If, on the other hand, the nation should prove refractory, the position might be serious, and would demand stringent measures. For through the plain of Belgium and the hilly Ardennes ran the communications of the great armies now sweeping towards Paris. No first-line troops could be spared to guard them; only reserves, and a limited number of these. To waste a field army by using it as an army of occupation was repugnant to the whole German theory of war. The process of Germanization was at once set going. Marshal von der Goltz had been nominated military governor of Belgium; governors were appointed for districts and cities; fines were levied on the different localities, to warn a presumably thrifty race of the folly of resistance; the clocks were changed to German time; German currency was introduced, and German nomenclature adopted. Everything was done to convince the Belgian people that the conquest of Belgium was an accomplished fact.

But the Belgian people obstinately refused to be convinced. The field army was not content with the security of Antwerp. On the 24th of August it made a sortie and took Malines, which commanded the best railway connection between Germany and West Flanders. At the moment there was considerable German activity towards the north-west of Belgium and the coast. General von Boehn's 9th Reserve Corps, destined to reinforce Kluck, was marching towards Bruges and Ghent, and a detachment of Uhlans was close upon Ostend. On 27th August three battalions of British Marines occupied that town, which might be the forerunners of a new British army.\* With the British at Ostend and the Belgians

\* This force was withdrawn on the 31st.

at Malines, the German forces in West Flanders might be caught in a trap, and the communications on which the great armies depended seriously imperilled. The Belgian sortie had the valuable result of depriving Kluck of his reinforcements and bringing Boehn hurriedly eastward again. The fighting in Belgium of the next three weeks took place for the most part in a triangle of which Antwerp was the apex and a line drawn from Termonde to Aerschot the base. A second sortie on the 9th September gave the Belgians Termonde and Aerschot, but by the 13th they had retired, when the Germans brought up a fresh division of the 3rd Reserve Corps. Thereafter there was nothing before them but a slow falling back upon Antwerp, and the enemy began to close in on that devoted city.

After this gallant diversion the misery which is inseparable from war increased to something like a reign of terror. Belgium was a most vulnerable land. The long-descended habits of its people made of it a hive of industry; its fields were tilled like gardens, its little cities were history embodied and visible, full of precious tokens of their stormy past and industrious present. Everywhere was a civilization rich, warm, compact, and continuous. In this most habitable land was to be seen some of the finest stone and brick work of the Flemish Renaissance, and whole streets and towns might have come intact from the fifteenth century. Everywhere were ancient church spires, rising far over the flats, and sweetening the air with their carillons; and in town and hamlet alike were masterpieces of Flemish tapestry and painting—the handiwork of Rubens and Vandyck and Bouts and Matsys. A bull on a common is a harmless creature, but he will play havoc in the cabinet of the virtuoso.

Let us deal first with the vandalism which was proven and admitted—the destruction of old and beautiful cities. Louvain was the chief university town of Belgium, and one of the intellectual centres of Catholic Europe. Even more than Oxford it whispered from its spires “the last enchantments of the Middle Age.” Its town hall was the most miraculous of the many miracles of Gothic architecture which adorned the Belgian plain. Its university was one of the oldest in Europe, and contained in its library riches of *incunabula* and manuscripts befitting a city which was associated with More and Erasmus. Its Church of St. Peter was full of treasures of painting and carving, and the fabric itself in its solemn simplicity rose majestically above the cluster of ancient dusky streets. On the evening of 25th August, while the Belgian

front was about ten miles distant, there was an outburst of rifle fire in the town, and several Germans were hit. The Germans announced that it was the outcome of a plot among the civilian populace, instigated by the Belgian Government; the Belgians declared that a detachment of Germans, driven back from Malines, was fired upon in mistake by the German troops of occupation. Such were the two tales; we need only add that the first was weakened by the fact that the Civic Guard of Louvain had already been disarmed, and the rifles in the town hunted out and confiscated; while the probability of the second was heightened by the proven circumstance that many of the German garrison were drunk. A certain Major von Manteuffel—an unworthy bearer of a famous name—was in command, and he gave the order for the destruction of the city. It was done as systematically as the condition of the soldiers allowed. Small incendiary tablets and fagots soaked in paraffin were flung in through the broken windows. Houses were entered and assiduously looted, what could not be carried away being smashed and flung into the streets. Presently much of the city was in a blaze. The university disappeared, and with it the great library; only the walls of St. Peter's Church remained; and who shall say how many ancient houses were turned into heaps of ashes? The town hall survived, saved by the Germans out of some sudden compunction, and that gemlike thing stood forlorn among the blackened acres.

Malines—the Mechlin which gave its name to the lace collars of our ancestors—was only less famous in the annals of Flanders. The great Cathedral of St. Rombaut, soaring with its unfinished tower above the Grande Place, dated from late in the thirteenth century, and contained the most superb of Vandyck's pictures. In its Palais de Justice Margaret of Austria had held court, and no city in the world was richer in ancient and storied houses. We have seen that the Belgian army retook Malines; but they did not hold it, for they were a field army and not a garrison. On 27th August, when the first German bombardment took place, there were probably no Belgian troops in the town. The roof and walls of the cathedral were riddled with shells, and the populace fled from the place in panic. On 2nd September it was again bombarded, and the German fire was directed successfully against the tower of St. Rombaut's. The famous bells, which had rung their carillon for five centuries, were shattered to pieces. Again on 26th September, when the scared inhabitants had begun to creep back, there was a third bombardment, which issued in a fire that raged





AUG. 28<sup>TH</sup> 1914.

## BATTLE IN THE BIGHT OF HELIGOLAND

1. SKETCH SHOWING EARLIER PHASES OF THE ACTION, 7-11 a.m. & POSITION ABOUT 11 a.m.

British shown in Brown  
German — — Black.

0 5 10 15 SEA MILES.

See Maps to this Issue.

(Between pp. 258 and 259.)

AND EAST BAY  
BATTLE IN THE  
BIGHT OF HEILGOLAND

A SKETCH SHOWING EARLIER PHASES  
OF THE ACTION, 7-11 a.m.  
A POSITION ABOUT 11 a.m.

Scale of 1/25,000  
Vertical Exaggeration 2x



furiously for days. Malines had to all intents gone the way of Louvain.\*

Termonde, which Marlborough had captured in his wars, was another historic town lying between Ghent and Malines, on the banks of the Scheldt. Unhappily it too had treasures in stone and lime—the Church of Notre Dame, with its paintings by Vandyck and Rubens, and its exquisite town hall. It was the theatre of desperate fighting during the first fortnight of September, but its destruction was not due to any battle. It was deliberately smashed to pieces during the German occupation because the fine levied upon it was not immediately forthcoming. Of all the Belgian cities, its fate perhaps was the direst, for almost literally it was levelled with the ground. Small wonder, for the burning was most scientifically managed. The houses were first sprayed with paraffin by soldiers, who perambulated the streets with oil-carts and hoses.

To cite Louvain, Malines, and Termonde is only to mention the most famous instances of destruction. Hundreds of little villages were laid waste, towns like Alost and Dinant were wantonly bombarded, and scarcely any part of this vandalism was imposed upon the invaders by military needs. Let us be very clear on this subject. War is a stern taskmistress, and will not be denied. If a famous church happens to be in the field of fire of an army in battle, the church must go. No æsthetic compunction can be allowed to interfere with strategical necessities. But only a small part of the demolition of Belgian cities was done for the purposes of military operations. Louvain was destroyed by the Germans at their leisure, while they were the force in occupation. Malines and Termonde were bombarded apparently out of pique, for the Belgians did not defend them. As for Dinant, it is hard to see what purpose was served by the ruin of its pleasant streets and the quaint church which lay in the nook of its cliffs. The Saxon army, who did the work, crossed the Meuse without difficulty, and did all their fighting on the farther bank. The only apparent motive was the inspiration of terror in the conquered, that the task of the future masters might be easy. Civilized war respects non-combatants, and not less those inanimate non-combatants, the great fabrics of the past. But this was not civilized war.

We come next to the subject of looting. Every town which was shelled or burned, and many which were not, were made the

\* It is fair to remember that Malines was only some 4,000 yards from the southern forts of Antwerp, and so almost in the battle-line.

object of a comprehensive robbery. Little places were plundered down to the last sheet and florin. Now, looting was once a perquisite of the victors, but it had long been interdicted in civilized warfare. Soldiers, of course, break out occasionally and loot; but they are disobeying orders, and suffer for it. But the German soldier did not break loose and disobey; he was too well drilled by the machine. The looting of the Belgian cities would have been impossible had it not been permitted and instigated by the officers in command. They turned their men free, and human nature, which is eternally acquisitive, did the rest.

Last comes the subject which made of this war a nightmare, and recalled the days of Tilly and Wallenstein—the murder and outrage done upon civilian non-combatants. Even after all doubtful cases are discarded—and the world for months was full of wild legends—there remains a long catalogue of proven outrages, many of which Germany admitted by the nature of her defence. She did not deny; she justified, and apparently believed sincerely in the justice of her plea. The bare facts—whatever the condonation—were, roughly, these. At Louvain there was a great deal of wholesale shooting of civilians—men, women, and children. At Aerschot there was something not unlike a massacre. The Germans alleged that one of their officers was treacherously shot dead by the burgomaster's son. One Belgian report admitted the shooting, but added that it was done in defence of his sister's honour; another denied it altogether. At Visé, at Alost, at Dinant, at Tamines, and many little villages, unarmed civilians were shot and bayoneted, sometimes on a charge of having firearms in their possession, sometimes apparently purely as an exemplary measure—*pour encourager les autres*. There were many cases of the murder of old people, women, and children by a drink-maddened or panicky soldiery. There were a number of well-authenticated cases of crimes against women and young girls. There were certain instances of the Germans having used non-combatants and women as a screen for their firing lines. There were cases of mutilation and torture too horrible to be recounted.

There have been various pleas in extenuation. One is that the Germans did not choose to treat armed civilians according to the ordinary laws of war, and they included the Belgian Civic Guard in this category. They simply did not accept the findings of the Hague Conventions on the subject. What their theory of war was we shall presently consider; but—difficult as it is to understand—it allowed them to do things which other nations chose



to regard as monstrous.\* This is, of course, not a defence, but it affords a partial explanation on other grounds than mere inherent brutality. A second is that there was a great deal of heavy drinking among the troops—an explanation again, not an excuse. German peasants swilled heavy red wine with the same freedom with which they were used to drink light beer, and the results were disastrous. Having said so much, the fact remains that in many cases there was a carnival of sheer murder which excelled the sack of Magdeburg and other seventeenth century horrors. Let us accept for a moment the German explanation of Louvain and Aerschot, and admit that they were treacherously shot at by one or more of the inhabitants. Did the punishment—the burning and looting of the town and wholesale murder and outrage—show any reasonable proportion to the crime? The plea is preposterous. It may be expedient that one man die for the people, but not that the people die for one or two men. The doctrine of collective responsibility might conceivably, if modestly interpreted, be used in war. The Roman penalty of “decimation” was such a use. It is barbarous and, to modern eyes, unjust, but it might be defended. But a holocaust by way of atonement has no sort of relation to any civilized code of justice. In barbarous armies, like Timour’s or Attila’s, we see how it happens. There you are dealing with elementary beings, savages inflamed and maddened by conquest. But this was the most modern of armies springing from the most modern of fatherlands, which had long vaunted to the world its civilization. Louvain and Aerschot were the fruit not of sudden passion but of a long-accepted doctrine.

A doctrine, let it be remembered, an “armed dogma” of the kind against which Burke warned the world. The ordinary German is not naturally cruel or brutal. He behaved badly in 1815, as we know from Wellington; but he conducted himself well on the whole in 1870. The authors of the atrocities were mostly Landwehr troops, many of them decent fathers of families and respectable *bourgeois*. There are blackguards in every army who now and then get out of hand, but it is impossible to think of the majority of these German troops as naturally blackguards. They carried in their knapsacks letters from their own Gretchens and Gertruds, and had set out with high notions about warring for their land and its “kultur.” Yet the result of their cam-

\* The Continental (and not merely the German) military law on the subject of civilians taken in arms and the use of hostages is different from the British and American; but the charge is not the formal law, but the preposterous extravagance with which it was enforced.

paingning was Louvain. How is it to be explained? Partly, no doubt, by panic—the fear of nervous, excitable folk in the midst of a hostile country; but mainly by the German doctrine of war. Their leaders had evolved an inhuman creed which they practised with the rigidity of Brahmins, and the disciplined troops acted as they were bid. Presently drink and bloodshed did their work, and what began as obedience to orders ended as a debauch.

The unhappy consequence of those deeds in France and Belgium was to destroy among the Allies the chivalrous respect for their opponents which is one of the antiseptics of war—that feeling which found expression in Whitman's cry, "My enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead." It is necessary to be very precise in our charges. Every nation at war believes evil things about its opponents, and takes for premeditated crimes what are merely the incidents of campaigning. Therefore we must confine ourselves to the outrages which are fully substantiated and incapable of being explained away as mistakes. Germany, again, broke many of the conventions of international law which she herself had formally accepted, but on these more abstract questions it is not worth while to argue. It matters little how many of the Hague rules she violated, since she altogether repudiated the bondage of international obligations. What is vital is the German breaches of laws, written and unwritten, which lie at the very root of civilized warfare. It is possible to imagine a Power, with Machiavellian notions about public conduct, and loose ideas about the rights of neutrals, who in the greater matters would fight with reasonable decency. But it is a different thing if she offends against those elementary human conventions which are observed by many savages and by all who claim the title of civilized. It is indubitable that Germany so offended, not once or twice, but with a consistency which argued a reasoned policy. The tradition of the German machine did not frown upon outrages; it favoured them. What was that policy? \*

We can call it, following a common practice, the Frederician tradition, though the army of Frederick had a curious respect for non-combatant rights; or if we wish a modern peg, we can call it the spirit of Zabern, from its most recent pre-war exemplification. Reasonably stated, as, for example, by Clausewitz, it means simply that war should be waged whole-heartedly, for the more

\* The reader will find the fullest discussion of Germany's infringements of international law and the customs of war in Professor Wilford Garner's *International Law and the World War* (1920).

whole-hearted it is the quicker it will be ended. War cannot be made with kid gloves. Loss of life, to your own side or the enemy's, is to be disregarded, so long as your object is attained. There is nothing inherently wrong in such an attitude. Stonewall Jackson, a humane man and a devout Christian, did not hesitate to sacrifice his troops or to inflict suffering upon the innocent, if relentlessness were necessary for success. But modern Germany consistently overstated this truth, until it became in her hands a fatal folly. We can see the overstatement beginning in Bismarck's famous words, though in practice he was wise enough to temper his heroics with common sense. "You must inflict," he said, "on the inhabitants of invaded towns the maximum of suffering, so that they may become sick of the struggle, and may bring pressure to bear on their Government to discontinue it. You must leave the people through whom you march only their eyes to weep with." \* But the full extravagance appeared in the speech of the Emperor when he addressed the troops leaving for China in 1900. "Quarter is not to be given. Prisoners are not to be made. Whoever falls into your hands is into your hands delivered. Just as a thousand years ago the Huns, under their king Attila, made for themselves a name which still appears imposing in tradition, so may the name of German become known in China." And he added to this pious exhortation, "The blessing of the Lord be with you."

Such a spirit is in clear defiance of the rules and decencies which must be observed if war is to be anything higher than the struggle of wild beasts. These rules are very old, and have been more or less observed since the days of Alexander the Great. All through the Middle Ages the ritual of chivalry provided a code of conduct in war, and a few centuries ago international jurists began to collect and expound the rules. Great lawyers like Grotius and Bynkershoek, Vattel and Puffendorf, laid down the customs of war between civilized peoples, and in our day the various Hague Conferences brought the code up to date, and secured the definite assent of the nations of the world. A Power which assents to and then violates these rules of decency is an outcast from the commonwealth of civilization. In every war they are broken, but they are broken against the will of the authorities of the belligerents. In the German case we had the curious result that their observance depended upon the character of the individual soldier; for officially they were disliked and disregarded.

\* He is generally believed to have borrowed this last phrase from the American general Sheridan, who accompanied the German Staff in 1870.

The German answer—always implied and often explicitly stated—was that they did not accept any laws of war which were against their interests. In the pride of those early days all classes, from the ordinary junker to intellectuals like Maximilian Harden, laughed and shrugged their shoulders at tales of outrage, even when they suspected that they might be true. Such things, they said, would be forgotten when they had conquered. They claimed to be a law to themselves, and if other people did not like it it was their business to show themselves stronger than the Germans. To this it might be replied that such anarchism was, to say the least of it, bad policy. Clausewitz long ago warned his countrymen that it was “inexpedient” to do anything to outrage the general moral sense of other peoples, and the great men who made the German Empire, Bismarck and Moltke, were tireless in their efforts to keep right with European opinion. For if no law is acknowledged, no conventions and codes of honour, then this lawlessness will certainly be turned some day against the lawbreakers themselves. No land will make an alliance with them or a treaty if their views on the duty of obligations are so notoriously lax. But the main point is that this crude lawlessness illustrated an interesting characteristic of what was then in Germany the governing mind—its curious immaturity. That mind was like a child’s, which simplifies too much. As we grow up we advance in complexity ; we see half-tones where before we saw only harsh blacks and whites ; we realize that nothing is quite alone, that everything is interrelated, and we become shy of bold simplicities. The mechanical may be simple ; the organic must be complex and manifold. It sounds so easy to say, like the villain in melodrama, that you will own no code except what you make yourself ; but it really cannot be done. It was not that the rejection of half a dozen of the diffuse findings of the Hague Tribunal mattered much ; what signified was the disregard of the unformulated creed which penetrates every part of our modern life—Germany’s, too, in her sober, non-martial moments. To massacre a hundred unarmed people because one man has fired off a rifle may be enjoined by some half-witted military theorist, but it is fundamentally inhuman and silly. It offends against not only the heart of mankind, but against their common sense. It is not even virilely wicked. It lacks intelligence. It is merely childish.

The same crudeness was found in other parts of the German scheme—for example, in their elaborate espionage system. The industry spent on it was more than human ; it was beaver-like,



ant-like, incredible, like the slavery of some laborious animal ; but it, and the hundred other things like it, could not win battles. It had its effect, but that effect was in no way commensurate with the pains taken. The truth is that human energy is limited, and if too much thought be given to minor things, no vitality will be left for the great matters. The weakness could be observed in many activities of the modern German mind—immense erudition which beat ineffectual wings and achieved little that was lasting in scholarship ; a meticulousness in business organization which terribly frightened the nervous British merchant, and yet somehow did not achieve much—nothing, at any rate, comparable with the care taken in the preparation. But it was most conspicuous in war. Frederick and Moltke were military geniuses of a high order ; but the military genius did not appear in Germany's superbly provided armies, for there was no room in them for the higher kind of intelligence. German industry was not mature ; it was like the painful, unintelligent absorption of a child. No amount of organizing the second-rate will produce the first-rate.

Let us suppose that a man starts in business with good brains and a reasonable capital. He resolves to be bound by nothing, to get on at all costs, to outstrip his neighbours by a greater industry and a complete unscrupulousness. He will keep within the four corners of the law, but he will have no regard to any of the antiquated decencies of trade. So he toils incessantly ; no detail is too small for him ; he studies and codifies what seem to him the popular tastes with the minuteness of a psychological laboratory ; he corrupts the employees of his rivals ; no bribe is too base for him ; he buys secrets and invites confidences only to betray them ; he is full of a thousand petty ingenuities ; he allows no human compassion to temper his ruthlessness ; his one god, for whom no sacrifice is too costly, is success. What will be the result of such a career ? Inevitably, failure. Failure, because his eternal preoccupation with small things ruins his mind for the larger view. The great truths in economics are always simple, but they escape a perverted ingenuity. He will not have the mind to grasp the major matters in supply and demand, and the odds are that, leaving the question of his certain unpopularity aside, he will be outclassed in sheer business talent by more scrupulous and less laborious competitors. Commerce is not the same thing as war, but the parallel in this case is fairly exact. The German mind could not see the wood for the trees. It knew the situation, dimensions, and value of every bit of timber ; but it had no time to spare for the quagmires

on either side, and it had no care for what might be beyond the forest.

The impression left by the spectacle of the wonderful machine, the proudest achievement of the modern German spirit, with its astonishing efficiency up to a point, its evidence of unwearied care and endless industry, remained oddly childish, like a toy on the making of which a passion of affection has been lavished. It was a perversion, an aberration, not a healthy development from the great Germany of the past. The man who can devise the campaign of Trafalgar is not the man who is always busy about the brass-work. Undue care is, not less than slovenliness, a sign of the immature and unbalanced mind. And the profession of a morality above all humble conventions, so far from impressing the world as godlike, seemed nothing but the swagger of a hobbledehoy. It was not barbarism, which is an honest and respectable thing; it was decivilization, which stands to civilization as a man's decay stands to his prime.

What of the little people who bore the brunt of this savagery? Before the war Belgium had been as sharply divided into parties and races as any nation in Europe. There were deep gulfs between Catholic and Socialist, between the peasants of Flanders and the colliers and factory hands of Hainault, between northern Fleming and southern Walloon. She had under no conceivable circumstances anything to gain from war. Her laborious population would at the best lose wealth and employment, and her closely settled land was an easy booty for the plunderer. In such a country the complex industrial machine, once put out of gear, would be hard to start again. From the material point of view Germany was right; it was insanity for Belgium to resist. Moreover, she had never made a profession of romantic adventures. She had been forced into the Congo business a little against her will, and her recent history showed none of the far-wandering restlessness in commerce and colonization which had characterized in different ways Germany and Britain. She was a home-keeping people who believed in attending to the shop. But when the day of trial came she did not waver. Her armies fought in the last ditch, and never for one moment was there a thought of surrender in the hearts of the nation. The prosperity which had taken generations to build up went in a day; she lost her land and her cities, her Government presently went into exile, and the shores of Britain were crowded with her fugitives. The Germans had tried to wheedle

her, but she shook her head ; they tried to frighten her, and found only tight lips ; and when again they tried cajolery and dithyrambs about the blessings of German rule, they were met with scornful laughter. Belgium replied, like Spain in Wordsworth's poem :—

“ We can endure that he should waste our lands,  
 Despoil our temples, and by sword and flame  
 Return us to the dust from which we came ;  
 Such food a Tyrant's appetite demands ;  
 And we can brook the thought that by his hands  
 Spain may be overpowered, and he possess,  
 For his delight, a solemn wilderness  
 Where all the brave lie dead. But, when of bands  
 Which he will break for us he dares to speak ;  
 Of benefits, and of a future day  
 When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway ;  
*Then* the strained heart of fortitude proves weak.”

Britain, the old ally and protector of Belgium, did the little in her power to mitigate this suffering. She had already lent the Belgian Government a large sum which was to carry no interest, and at the end of August a private organization—originally destined by the irony of fate for the reception of ultra-Protestant refugees from Ulster—was organized as a relief committee. Presently the Government took over the work, and the Belgian fugitives became officially the guests of Britain. Did the crowds that stared curiously at the haggard, grey-faced people who arrived by every boat at Folkestone, and soon began to throng the London streets—all classes of society—all forms of raiment—realize that they were looking upon the results of the most heroic sacrifice in modern history ? The miracle was the more wonderful from its unexpectedness. We are ready to cheer Mr. Greatheart when he advances to meet the giant ; it is splendid, but we knew it would happen, for after all giant-killing is his profession. But when some homely pilgrim, without shining armour or great sword, seizes his staff and marches stoutly to a more desperate conflict we do not cheer. It is a marvel which dims the eyes and catches at the heart-strings.

Much was due to her King, the most purely heroic figure of the day. No monarch of the great ages more nobly fulfilled the ideal of kingship. He raised Belgium to the position of a Great Power, if moral dignity has any meaning in the world. There can be no finer tribute to him than some words spoken by a refugee,

a quiet little man who had lost family and livelihood, and seemed to peer out upon a new world like a dazed child: "Frankly, we did not think we could have behaved so well. You will understand that we are a small people, a people of traders, not greatly interested in high politics or war. We needed a leader, and God sent that leader. We owe everything to our King. He has made of our farmers and tradesmen a nation of heroes. When the war is over he will rule over a broken land and a very poor people, but for all that he will be one of the greatest kings in the world."



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR AT SEA.

*4th August—22nd September.*

Germany's Naval Policy—Sir John Jellicoe's Problem—The Transport of the Armies—Escape of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*—Protection of the Trade Routes—Security of the British Coasts—The Battle of the Bight of Heligoland—What Control of the Sea implies—The Submarine Menace—The German Commerce-raiders—The Declaration of London.

EARLY on the morning of 4th August the British Grand Fleet put to sea. From that moment it disappeared from English sight. Dwellers on the southern and eastern coasts in the bright weather of early August could see an occasional cruiser or destroyer speeding on some errand, or an escorted mine-sweeper busy at its perilous task. But the great battleships had gone. Somewhere out on the blue waters or hidden in a creek of our northern and western shores lay the vigilant admirals of Britain. But presently came news. On the night of the 4th the German mine-layer *Königin Luise* left Borkum, and about 11 a.m. on the 5th she was sighted, chased, and sunk by two British destroyers. Early on the 6th the British light cruiser *Amphion* struck one of the mines she had laid, and foundered with some loss of life. Battle had been joined at sea.

To the command of the Grand Fleet there had been appointed Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, with Rear-Admiral Charles Madden as Chief of Staff. It consisted at the moment of twenty Dreadnoughts, eight "King Edwards," four battle cruisers, two squadrons of cruisers and one of light cruisers. Those who shared Stevenson's view as to the racy nonenclature of British seamen found something reassuring in the name of the new Commander-in-Chief. Admiral Jellicoe had served as a lieutenant in the Egyptian war of 1882. Specializing in gunnery, he had become a commander in 1891 and a captain in 1897; had served on the China station, commanding the Naval Brigade and acting as chief staff officer in the Peking expedition of 1900, where he was severely

wounded. Thereafter he became successively Naval Assistant to the Controller of the Navy, Director of Naval Ordnance and Torpedoes, Rear-Admiral in the Atlantic Fleet, a Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty and Controller of the Navy, Vice-Admiral commanding the Atlantic Fleet, Vice-Admiral commanding the Second Division of the Home Fleet, and second Sea Lord of the Admiralty. He brilliantly distinguished himself in the command of the "Red" Fleet at the naval manœuvres of 1913. Rear-Admiral Madden, his Chief of Staff, who was also his brother-in-law, had already served with him at the Admiralty. Sir John Jellicoe was one of the officers chiefly responsible for the modern navy of Britain, and enjoyed not only the admiration and complete confidence of his colleagues, but a peculiar popularity among all grades of British seamen. His nerve and self-possession were not less conspicuous than his professional skill, and in the wearing months ahead of him he had need of all resources of mind and character.

The British fleet had not fought a great battle at sea since Trafalgar. Since those days, only a century removed in time, the conditions of naval warfare had seen greater changes than in the span between Themistocles and Nelson. The old wooden walls, the unrifled guns, the boarders with their cutlasses, belonged to an earlier world. The fleet had no longer to scour the ocean for the enemy's fleet. Wireless telegraphy, aerial reconnaissance, and swift destroyers brought it early news of a foe. The gun power of a modern battleship would have wrecked the Spanish Armada with one broadside, and the enemy could now be engaged at a distance of many miles. Sea fighting was no more the clean and straightforward business of the old days. Destruction dwelt in every element when there was no sign of a hostile pennant. Aircraft dropped bombs from the clouds; unseen submarines, like sword-fish, pierced the hull from the depths; and anywhere might lurk those mines which destroyed, like some convulsion of nature, with no human enemy near. Britain had to fight under new conditions, with new strategy and new weapons, with far greater demands on the intellect and a far more deadly strain on the nerves. Most things had changed, but two things remained unaltered—the cool daring of her sailors, and their conviction that the seas were the unquestionable heritage of their race.

Germany's naval policy in the first instance was, as we have seen, to refuse battle and withdraw her fleet behind prepared defences. To this decision various purposes contributed. She

needed every soldier she possessed in the battle-line, and wished to avoid the necessity of guarding her Pomeranian coast with an army. Again, she hoped that public opinion in Britain, alarmed at the inactivity of its navy, would compel an attack on the Elbe position—an attack which, she believed, would end in a British disaster. But her defence was not to be passive. By a mine and submarine offensive, pushed right up to the British coasts, she hoped to wear down Britain's superiority in capital ships and bring it in the end to an equality with her own. Then, and not till then, her High Seas Fleet was willing to sally forth and give battle.

To meet such Fabian tactics was no easy problem for Britain. The ordinary citizen hoped for a theatrical *coup*, a full dress battle, or at the least a swift series of engagements with enemy warships. When nothing happened he began to think that something was amiss; he could not believe that it was a proof of success that nothing happened—nothing startling, that is to say, for every day had its full record of quiet achievement. As a consequence of this inactivity, false doctrines began to be current, in which, let it be said, the British naval leaders did not share. It was Britain's business to command the sea, and so long as an enemy fleet remained intact, that command was not absolute but qualified. The British fleet might be invincible, but it was not yet victorious. Its numerous minor activities were not undertaken for their own sake, as if in themselves they could give the final victory; they were forms of compulsion conceived in order to force the High Sea Fleet to come out and fight. But that ultimate battle was not to be induced by measures which spelt suicide for the attacker. There were urgent tasks to be performed on the ocean—in protecting British trade, in cutting off enemy imports, in moving the troops of a world-wide Empire. So long as these were duly performed the practical mastery of the seas was in British hands, and it would have been criminal folly to throw away capital ships in an immediate attack on the fortified retreat of so accommodating an enemy. It was Britain's duty to perform this work of day-to-day sea control, and to be ready at any moment for the grand battle. On land an army fights its way yard by yard to a position from which it can deal a crushing blow. But a fleet needs none of these preliminaries. As soon as the enemy chooses to appear the battle can be joined. Hence Admiral von Ingenohl was right in saving his fleet for what he considered a better chance, and Britain was right in not forcing him unduly. Naval power should be used, not squandered, and the mightiest fleet on earth may be flung away on

a fool's errand. It should not be forgotten that the strength of a fleet is a more brittle and less replaceable thing than the strength of an army. New levies can be called for on land, and tolerable infantry trained in a few months. But in the navy it takes six years to make a junior officer, two years in normal times to build a cruiser, and three years to replace a battleship. A serious loss in fighting units is, for any ordinary naval war, an absolute, not a temporary, calamity.

Sir John Jellicoe had to face a problem far more intricate than at the time was commonly believed. Not since the seventeenth century had Britain confronted a great naval Power whose base lay northward of the Straits of Dover. The older British sea strategy had assumed an enemy to southward of the English Channel, and on the southern coasts lay the best and securest of our naval ports. But now the foe lay across the stormy North Sea, 120,000 square miles in extent, into which he possessed two separate entries linked by the Kiel Canal. The east coast of Britain was now the fighting front, and on it lay a dozen vulnerable ports and no first-class fleet base. Before 1914 this situation had been foreseen, but it had not been adequately met. A first-class base was in preparation at Rosyth, but it was not yet ready, and in any case its outer anchorage was exposed to torpedo attack. In 1910 Cromarty had been selected as a fleet base, and Scapa in the Orkneys as a base for minor forces, and by July 1914 the fixed defences of the former were ready. But nothing had been done at Scapa, which from its position and size was selected as the Grand Fleet base on the outbreak of hostilities. Jellicoe was aware of the German purpose of attrition, and realized that till his base was better secured his fleet was at the mercy of an enemy attack both in harbour and in its North Sea cruises, for he was still very short of mine-sweepers and destroyers to form a protective screen. He saw that Germany's chance lay in the uncertainty of the first month, when Britain had to perform many urgent naval tasks before her sea organization was complete. He therefore decided to confine his Battle Fleet in ordinary conditions to operations in the more northern waters of the North Sea, and to establish in the southern waters a regular system of cruiser patrols, supported by periodic sweeps of the Battle Fleet. It was his business to avoid losses so far as possible from the casual mine and submarine, and at the same time to protect the British coasts from raids and be ready at any moment to fall upon the High Seas Fleet if it ventured out—a combination of calculated duties and incalculable hazards



trying under any circumstances, and doubly trying when the Grand Fleet had not yet found a certain home.

The problems of the Grand Fleet were not the only ones confronting the Admiralty, which had to deal with all the waters of the world. There were three urgent tasks which had to be performed while a wider strategy was in process of shaping—the safe transport of the Expeditionary Force to France; the clearing and safeguarding of the trade routes; and the protection of the British coasts against enemy attacks, whether sporadic raids or a concerted invasion. Let us consider briefly how the three duties were fulfilled before turning to the events in the main battle area of the North Sea.

The first, so far as concerned the British army, was brilliantly performed. There were no convoys, but both ends of the Channel were closed against raids, by the Dover Patrol at one end and the Anglo-French cruiser squadron at the other, while the Grand Fleet took up a station from which it could strike at the High Sea Fleet, should Ingenohl venture out. During the crossing of the Expeditionary Force there was no sign of the enemy—a piece of supineness which can be explained only on the supposition that Germany considered the British army too trivial a matter to risk ships over. In the Mediterranean France had a similar problem. On 4th August Italy announced her neutrality, and Austria had not yet declared war on Britain or France, though it was clear that the declaration was imminent. The Austrian fleet was in the Northern Adriatic and had to be watched. Germany had in the Mediterranean the fastest armoured ships in her navy: the battle cruiser *Goeben* and the fast light cruiser *Breslau*—two vessels admirably fitted to act as commerce destroyers. The British squadron consisted of three battle cruisers, four heavy cruisers, and four light cruisers—a greatly superior force in gun power, but containing no vessel which was the *Goeben's* equal in speed. It was their business to prevent the German ships making for the Atlantic, and to hunt them down at the earliest possible moment. But the situation was complicated by two factors—one, the necessary co-operation with the French; the other, the difficulty of receiving in time the orders of the British Admiralty, which had the strategic direction of the operations. In such a chase unless the man on the spot can act on his own responsibility the quarry may escape, for from hour to hour the situation changes.

The first orders of Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne, who commanded the British squadron, were to protect the movements of the French

transports from Algiers to Toulon. At daybreak on the 4th the *Goeben* and *Breslau* appeared off the Algerian coast and fired a few shots at the coast towns of Bona and Philippeville. Meantime Admiral Souchon, in command of the *Goeben*, had received wireless instructions from Berlin to proceed to Constantinople. Admiral de Lapeyrère, commanding the Toulon fleet, decided on his own initiative to depart from his original instructions (which were to operate to the eastward of the transports) and to form convoys. The decision was sound, for his ships were too slow to hunt down the enemy, and by putting them alongside the transports he was in a better position for both defence and a blow at the Germans if they were shepherded westward. This decision should have left Admiral Milne's force to pursue the *Goeben*, but unfortunately his first instructions from the Admiralty were not cancelled, and this was the main cause of the fiasco which followed. Souchon, after feinting to the west, turned eastward and reached Messina on the 5th. Milne took up a position which he believed to be in accordance with his orders, and which would have cut off Souchon had he come westward again. But Souchon passed out of the southern end of the straits in the evening, and if he could get clear of Admiral Troubridge in the mouth of the Adriatic, the way was open for him to the Dardanelles. Now Troubridge had with him no battle cruiser, he had instructions from the Admiralty not to risk an action against a superior force, and he considered therefore that he was not entitled to fight unless he could manœuvre the enemy into a favourable position. Souchon feinted towards the Adriatic, and then turned south-east for Cape Matapan. Troubridge gave up the chase when day broke on the 7th and slowed down, waiting on the British battle cruisers which did not come. The *Gloucester* (Captain Howard Kelly), a ship scarcely larger than the *Breslau*, clung, however, to the enemy skirts, and fought a running fight till 1.50 p.m. on the 7th. Souchon was not yet out of danger, for when he reached the Ægean he heard that he would not be permitted to enter the Dardanelles, and was compelled for several days to cruise among the islands. Milne, who followed slowly, was soon within a hundred miles of the Germans, but believed that they were making for Alexandria, or about to break back to join the Austrians. On the 9th Souchon heard the wireless of the British, and decided at all costs to run for Constantinople. At 8.30 p.m. on the 10th he was allowed to enter the Dardanelles.

The British failure was to have the most malign and far-reaching

consequences. Souchon, perplexed by conflicting orders from Berlin, played, largely on his own responsibility, a bold game which succeeded. The British admirals, dutifully following their Admiralty's formal instructions, missed their chance. They were very properly exonerated from blame, for the mistake was the result of the new conditions of war. They received by wireless all the news that reached the Admiralty, and consequently had to keep their eyes turning every way instead of concentrating on the one vital object. In the old days an admiral would have been left to his general instructions, and, had he been a bold man, would have destroyed the enemy.

The second task was the clearing and safeguarding of the world's trade-routes. The first step lay with the Grand Fleet, for, as Sir Julian Corbett has well put it, "since all the new enemy's home terminals lay within our own home waters, we could close them by the same disposition with which we ensured free access to our own." But, the earths having been stopped, it was necessary to run down the quarries. All German cables were cut, and, except for wireless, her outlying ships were left without guidance from home. In every quarter of the globe British cruisers spread their net. German merchantmen in the ports of the Empire were detained, and hundreds of ships were made prize of in the high and the narrow seas. Some escaped to the shelter of neutral ports, especially to those of the United States, but none got back to Germany. In a week German seaborne commerce had ceased to exist, and on 14th August the Admiralty could announce that the passage of the Atlantic was safe. It was true that a few German cruisers and armed merchantmen were still at large. Admiral von Spee had in the Pacific the armoured cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and the light cruisers *Nürnberg*, *Leipzig*, and *Emden*; the light cruisers *Karlsruhe* and *Dresden* were in the Atlantic. But the number seemed too few and their life too precarious seriously to affect our commerce. The British Government very properly began by guaranteeing part of the risk of maritime insurance; but soon the rates fell of their own accord to a natural level, as it became clear how complete was our security. It was calculated at the outbreak of war that British losses in the first six months would rise to 10 per cent. of vessels engaged in foreign trade. A return issued early in October showed that of her mercantile marine Britain had lost up to that date only 1.25 per cent., while Germany and Austria had each lost 10 per cent. of their total shipping.

The third problem, the security of the British coast from invasion, loomed large in those early days. The curious inactivity of the enemy during the crossing of the Expeditionary Force seemed to presage a great surprise attack in the near future. The danger was much in Lord Kitchener's mind, and, considering that it was unsafe to leave the country without at least two regular divisions, he postponed the crossing of the 6th Division and brought it to East Anglia. The heavy ships of the Grand Fleet, owing to the risk of submarines, were ordered on 9th August to go north-west of the Orkneys, and since the enemy had located Scapa, a second war anchorage was established on the north-west coast of Scotland at Loch Ewe. They were brought east again on the 15th when the risk of invasion seemed greatest, and took up a midsea position in the latitude of Aberdeen, while Rear-Admiral Christian's Southern Force, which included the Harwich flotilla, and was now an independent command directly under the Admiralty, watched the southern waters. On the 17th, the immediate danger being over, the Grand Fleet returned to Loch Ewe. Against minor raids the protection of the coasts lay with the destroyer flotillas, which were organized in two classes, "Patrol" and "Local Defence." Presently a vast auxiliary service was created from the mercantile marine, from the fishing fleets, from private yachts and motor boats. Britain became a nation in arms on the water as well as on the land, and her merchantmen became part of the navy as in her ancient wars.

Meantime she did not forget the major duty of watching and enticing to battle the German High Sea Fleet. Apart from the regular cruisers of the British fleet and the cruiser squadrons in the North Sea, the Harwich flotilla kept watch to the very edge of the German sanctuary. The German admiral's aim was to send out patrols which would entice the British destroyers inside the Bight of Heligoland and then to cut in behind them with his light cruisers. There was an attempt of this sort on 18th August; another on 21st August, when the German light cruiser *Rostock* had a narrow escape; but both were fruitless thrusts into the void. A third operation on the night of 25th August laid mines off the Tyne and the Humber. At this time both sides overestimated the danger from submarines and were over-careful with their heavier ships; consequently any action was likely to be fought by only a fraction of the strength of the combatants. But the strategy of two opponents, however cautious, operated on converging lines which were certain sooner or later to meet, and the result was that



28th August, the day when Sir John French's army reached the Oise, saw the first important naval engagement of the war.

The plan, which originated with Commodore Roger Keyes, was to lure out to sea the enemy day patrols and intercept them by our destroyer flotillas while British cruisers and battle cruisers waited in readiness to deal with any heavier German ships that came out in support.\* The battle cruisers were the largest and newest of their class, displacing some 27,000 tons, with a speed of 29 knots, and an armament each of eight 13.5 and sixteen 4-inch guns. The First Light-Cruiser Squadron contained ships of the "town" class—5,500 tons, 25 to 26 knots, and eight or nine 6-inch guns. The Seventh Cruiser Squadron were older ships from the Third Fleet—12,000 tons and 21 knots. The First Destroyer Flotilla contained destroyers each of about 800 tons, 30 knots, and two 4-inch and two 12-pounder guns. The Third Flotilla was composed only of the largest and latest type—965 tons, 32 knots, and three 4-inch guns. Of the accompanying cruisers the *Arethusa*—the latest of an apostolic succession of vessels of that name—was the first ship of a new class; her tonnage was 3,750, her speed 30 knots, and her armament two 6-inch and six 4-inch guns. Her companion, the *Fearless*, had 3,440 tons, 26 knots, and ten 4-inch guns. The two small destroyers which accompanied the submarines, the *Lurcher* and the *Firedrake*, had 767 tons, 35 knots, and two 4-inch and two 12-pounder guns.

At midnight on the 26th the submarine flotilla, under Commodore Keyes, sailed from Harwich for the Bight of Heligoland.

\* The various forces engaged may be set down in the order of their appearance in the action.

1. *Eighth Submarine Flotilla* (Commodore Roger Keyes).—Parent ships: Destroyers *Lurcher* and *Firedrake*. Submarines: D2, D8, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9.
2. *Destroyer Flotillas* (Commodore R. Y. Tyrwhitt).—Flagship: Light cruiser *Arethusa*.  
First Destroyer Flotilla: Light cruiser *Fearless* (Captain Blunt).—Destroyers: *Acheron*, *Archer*, *Ariel*, *Attack*, *Badger*, *Beaver*, *Defender*, *Ferret*, *Forester*, *Goshawk*, *Hind*, *Jackal*, *Lapwing*, *Lizard*, *Phœnix*, *Sandfly*.  
Third Destroyer Flotilla: *Laertes*, *Laforey*, *Lance*, *Landrail*, *Lark*, *Laurel*, *Lawford*, *Legion*, *Leonidas*, *Lennox*, *Liberty*, *Linnet*, *Llewelyn*, *Lookout*, *Louis*, *Lucifer*, *Lydiard*, *Lysander*.
3. *First Light-Cruiser Squadron* (Commodore W. R. Goodenough).—*Southampton*, *Falmouth*, *Birmingham*, *Lowestoft*, *Nottingham*.
4. *First Battle-Cruiser Squadron* (Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty).—*Lion*, *Princess Royal*, *Queen Mary*, *New Zealand*. Joined at sea by *Invincible* (Rear-Admiral Moore) and by destroyers: *Hornet*, *Hydra*, *Tigress*, and *Loyal*.
5. *Seventh Cruiser Squadron* (Rear-Admiral A. H. Christian).—Armoured cruisers: *Euryalus*, *Cressy*, *Hogue*, *Aboukir*, *Sullej*, *Bacchante*, and light cruiser *Amethyst*.

At five o'clock on the evening of the 27th the First and the Third Destroyer Flotillas, under Commodore Tyrwhitt, left Harwich, and during that day the Battle-Cruiser Squadron, the First Light-Cruiser Squadron, and the Seventh Cruiser Squadron also put to sea. The rendezvous appointed was reached early on the morning of the 28th, the waters having been searched for hostile submarines before dawn by the *Lurcher* and the *Firedrake*. The enemy had word of their coming, and was preparing a counterplot. His usual patrols were not sent out, but a few torpedo boats were dispatched to the entrance of the Bight as a bait to entice the attackers into a net which would be drawn tight by his light cruisers.

The chronicle must now concern itself with hours and minutes. The first phase of the action began just before 7 a.m. on the 28th. The morning had broken windless and calm, with a haze which limited the range of vision to under three miles. The water was like a mill-pond, and out of the morning mist rose the gaunt rock of Heligoland, with its forts and painted lodging-houses and crumbling sea-cliffs. It was the worst conceivable weather for the submarines, since in a calm sea their periscopes were easily visible. The position at seven o'clock was as follows. Close to Heligoland, and well within German territorial waters, were Commodore Keyes's eight submarines, with his two small destroyers in attendance. Approaching rapidly from the north-west were Commodore Tyrwhitt's two destroyer flotillas, while behind them, at some distance and a little to the east, was Commodore Goodenough's First Light-Cruiser Squadron. Behind it lay Sir David Beatty's battle cruisers, with four destroyers in attendance. A good deal to the south, and about due west of Heligoland, lay Admiral Christian's Seventh Cruiser Squadron, to stop all exit towards the west.

The submarines, foremost among them E6, E7, and E8, performed admirably the work of a decoy, and presently from behind Heligoland came a number of German destroyers. These were followed by two cruisers, and the submarines and their attendant destroyers fled westwards, while the British destroyer flotillas came swiftly down from the north-west. At the sight of the latter the German destroyers turned to make for home; but the British flotillas, led by the Third, along with the *Arethusa*, altered their course to port in order to head them off. "The principle of the movement," said the official report, "was to cut the German light craft from home and engage them at leisure in the open sea." The destroyers gave little trouble, and our own ships of that

class were quite competent to deal with them. But between our two attendant cruisers and the two German cruisers a fierce battle was waged. About eight o'clock the *Arethusa*—*clarum et venerabile nomen*—was engaged with the German *Stettin* and the *Frauenlob*, and till the *Fearless* drew the *Stettin's* fire, was exposed to the broadsides of the two vessels, and was considerably damaged. About 8.25, however, one of her shots shattered the forebridge of the *Frauenlob*, and the crippled vessel drew off towards Heligoland, whither the *Stettin* soon followed. Meantime the destroyers had not been idle. They had sunk the leading boat of the German flotilla, V187, and had damaged a dozen more. With great heroism they attempted to save the German sailors now struggling in the water, and lowered boats for the purpose. These boats, as we shall see, came into deadly peril during the next phase of the action.

On the retreat of the *Stettin* and the *Frauenlob* the destroyer flotillas were ordered to turn westward. The gallant *Arethusa* was in need of attention, for a water-tank had been hit, and all her guns save one were temporarily out of action. She was soon repaired, and only two of her 4-inch guns were left still out of order. Between nine and ten o'clock, therefore, there was a lull in the fight, which we may take as marking the break between the first and second phases of the battle. The submarines, with their attendants, *Lurcher* and *Firedrake*, were still in the immediate vicinity of Heligoland, as well as some of the destroyers which had boats out to save life.

About ten o'clock the second phase began. The Germans believed that the only hostile vessels in the neighbourhood were the submarines, destroyers, the *Arethusa* and the *Fearless*, and they resolved to take this excellent chance of annihilating them. First the *Stettin* returned, and came on the boats of the First Flotilla busy saving life, and, thinking apparently that the British had adopted the insane notion of boarding, opened a heavy fire on them. The small destroyers were driven away, and two boats, belonging to the *Goshawk* and the *Defender*, were cut off under the guns of Heligoland. At this moment submarine E4 (Lieutenant-Commander E. W. Leir) appeared alongside. By the threat of a torpedo attack he drove off the German cruiser for a moment, and took on board the British seamen.

The *Arethusa*, the *Fearless*, and the destroyers now moved westward. They had already suffered considerably, and their speed and handiness must have been reduced. The next incident was an artillery duel between the *Arethusa* and the *Stralsund*, a

four-funnelled cruiser of the "Breslau" class. Then came the *Mainz*, which engaged the First Flotilla, till she was headed off by the appearance of Commodore Goodenough's light cruisers. So far the destroyer flotillas had covered themselves with glory, but their position was far from comfortable. They were in German home waters, not far from the guns of Heligoland (which the fog seems to have made useless at that range); they were a good deal crippled, though still able to fight; and they did not know but that at any moment the blunt noses of Ingenohl's great battleships might come out of the mist. The battle had now lasted for five hours—ample time for the ships in the Elbe to come up. Commodore Tyrwhitt about eleven had sent a wireless signal to Sir David Beatty asking for help, and by twelve o'clock that help was sorely needed. It was on its way. Admiral Beatty, on receipt of the signal, at once sent the First Light-Cruiser Squadron south-eastwards. The first vessels, the *Falmouth* and the *Nottingham*, arrived on the scene of action about twelve o'clock, and proceeded to deal with the damaged *Mainz*. By this time the First Destroyer Flotilla had retired westward, but the Third Flotilla and the *Arethusa* were still busy with the *Stralsund*. Admiral Beatty had to take a momentous decision. There was every likelihood that some of the enemy's great armoured and battle cruisers were close at hand, and he wisely judged that "to be of any value the support must be overwhelming." It was a risky business to take his vessels through a mine-strewn and submarine-haunted sea; but in naval warfare the highest risks must be run. Hawke pursued *Conflans* in a stormy dusk into Quiberon Bay, and Nelson before Aboukir risked in the darkness the shoals and reefs of an uncharted sea. So Admiral Beatty gave orders at 11.30 for the battle cruisers to steam E.S.E. at full speed. They were several times attacked by submarines, but their pace saved them, and when later the *Queen Mary* was in danger she avoided it by a skilful use of the helm. By 12.15 the smoke-blackened eyes of the *Arethusa's* men saw the huge shapes of our battle cruisers emerging from the northern mists.

Their advent decided the battle. They found the *Mainz* fighting gallantly but on fire and sinking by the head, and steered north-eastward to where the *Arethusa* and the *Stralsund* were hard at work. The *Fearless* was meantime engaged with the *Stettin* and a new cruiser, the *Köln*. The *Lion* came first, and she alone among the battle cruisers seems to have used her guns. Her immense fire power and admirable gunnery beat down all opposi-



AUG. 28<sup>TH</sup> 1914.

## BATTLE IN THE BIGHT OF HELIGOLAND

II. FINAL PHASE OF THE ACTION.  
INTERVENTION OF BEATTY'S BATTLE-CRUISERS. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

British shown in Brown.  
German in Black.

0 5 10 15 SEA MILES



THE GREAT  
RIVER OF THE  
WEST



(Lithographed by the U.S. Army)

tion. The *Köln* fled before her, but the *Lion's* guns at extreme range hit her and set her on fire. Presently the *Ariadne* hove in sight from the south—the forerunner, perhaps, of a new squadron. Two salvos from the terrible 13.5-inch guns sufficed for her, and, burning furiously, she disappeared into the haze. Then the battle cruisers circled north again, and in ten minutes finished off the *Köln*. She sank like a plummet with every soul on board. At twenty minutes to two Admiral Beatty turned homeward. The submarines and the destroyer flotillas had already gone westward, and the Light-Cruiser Squadron, in a fan-shaped formation, preceded the battle cruisers. Admiral Christian's squadron was left to escort the damaged ships and defend the rear.

By that evening the whole British force was in its own waters without the loss of a single unit. The *Arethusa* had been badly damaged, but in a week was ready for sea again. The British casualties were thirty-five killed and about forty wounded. The Germans lost three light cruisers, the *Mainz*, *Köln*, and *Ariadne*, and one destroyer, the *V187*. At least 700 of the German crews perished, and there were over 300 prisoners.

Of the Battle of the Bight it may fairly be said that it was creditable to both victors and vanquished. The Germans fought in the true naval spirit, and the officers stood by their ships till they went down. The gallantry of our own men was conspicuous, as was their readiness to run risks in saving life, a readiness which the enemy handsomely acknowledged. The submarine flotilla fought under great disadvantages, but the crews never wavered, and their attendant destroyers, the *Lurcher* and the *Firedrake*, were constantly engaged with heavier vessels. The two destroyer flotillas were not less prominent, and, having taken the measure of the German destroyers, did not hesitate to engage the enemy's cruisers. But the chief glory belonged to the *Arethusa* and the *Fearless*, who for a critical hour bore the brunt of the battle. For a time they were matched against three German cruisers, which between them had a considerably greater force of fire. Nowadays much of naval fighting is so nearly a mathematical certainty that, given the guns and the speed, you can calculate the result. But it was the good fortune of the *Arethusa* to show her mettle in a conflict which more resembled the audacious struggles of Nelson's day. It is a curious fact that though we had some sixty vessels in the action from first to last, only four or five were hit. The light-cruiser squadron and the battle cruisers decided the battle, and while their blows were deadly,

the enemy never got a chance of retaliation. From twelve o'clock onward it was scientific modern destruction; before that it was any one's fight.

The chief consequence of the Battle of the Bight was its moral effect upon Germany. Ingenohl was confirmed in his resolution to keep his battleships in harbour, and not even a daring sweeping movement of the British early in September, when our vessels came within hearing of the church bells on the German coast, could goad him into action. But he retaliated by an increased activity in mine-laying and the use of submarines. In the land warfare of the Middle Ages there came a time when knights and horses were so heavily armoured that they lost mobility, and what had been regarded as the main type of action ended in stalemate. Wherefore, since men must find some way of conquering each other, came the chance for the hitherto despised lighter troops, and the archers and spearmen began to win battles like Courtrai and Bannockburn. A similar stalemate was now reached as between the capital ships of the rival navies. The British battleships were vast and numerous; the German fleet, less powerful at sea, was strong in its fenced harbour. No decision could be arrived at by the heavily armed units, so the war passed for the moment into the hands of the lesser craft. For a space of several months the Germans fought almost wholly with mines and submarines. One truth at this period was somewhat forgotten by the British people. Command of the sea, unless the enemy's navy is totally destroyed, does not mean complete protection. This had been well stated in a famous passage by Admiral Mahan \* :—

“The control of the sea, however real, does not imply that an enemy's single ships or small squadrons cannot steal out of ports, and cross more or less frequented tracts of ocean, make harassing descents upon unprotected points of a long coast-line, enter blockaded harbours. On the contrary, history has shown that such evasions are always possible, to some extent, to the weaker party, however great the inequality of naval strength.”

It has been true in all ages, and was especially true now that the mine and submarine had come to the assistance of the weaker combatant. Our policy was to blockade Germany, so that she should suffer and our own life go on unhindered. But the blockade could only be a watching blockade; it could not seal up every unit of the enemy's naval strength. To achieve the latter we

\* *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, p. 14.



should have had to run the risk of missing the very goal at which we aimed. It was our business to see that Germany did nothing without our knowledge, and to encourage her ships to come out that we might fall upon them. Her business was to make our patrolling as difficult as possible. To complain of British losses in such a task was to do precisely what Germany wished us to do, in order that caution might take the place of a bold and aggressive vigilance.

Germany had laid in the first days of the war a large mine-field off our eastern coasts, and early in September, by means of trawlers disguised as neutrals, she succeeded in dropping mines off the north coast of Ireland, which endangered our Atlantic commerce and the operations of our Grand Fleet. The right precaution—the closing of the North Sea to neutral shipping, unless specially convoyed—was not taken till later in the day, and even then was too perfunctorily organized. But the mine-field, for all its terrors, was not productive of much actual loss to our fighting strength. During the first two months of war, apart from the *Amphion*, the only casualty was the old gun-boat *Speedy*, which struck a mine and foundered in the North Sea on 3rd September. Indeed the new German mine-field had its advantages; since it barred certain approaches to our coast, it released our flotillas for a more extensive coastwise patrol.

The submarine was a graver menace. On 5th September the *Pathfinder*, a light cruiser of 2,940 tons, with a crew of 268, was torpedoed off the Lothian coast and sunk with great loss of life. Eight days later the German light cruiser *Hela*, a vessel slightly smaller than the *Pathfinder*, was sunk by the British submarine *Eg* (Lieutenant Max Horton) in wild weather between Heligoland and the Frisian coast—an exploit of exceptional boldness and difficulty. During that fortnight a storm raged, and our patrols found it hard to keep the seas, many of the smaller destroyers being driven to port. This storm led indirectly to the first serious British loss of the war. Three cruisers of an old pattern, the *Cressy*, *Hogue*, and *Aboukir*, which were part of Admiral Christian's Southern Force, had for three weeks been engaged in patrolling off the Dutch coast. It is obvious that three large ships carrying heavy crews should not have been employed on a duty which could have been performed better and more safely by lighter vessels, but the Admiralty had not yet got the new light cruisers of the *Arctusa* class which were to relieve them. No screen of destroyers was with them at the moment,

owing to the storm. On 22nd September the sky had cleared and the seas fallen, and about half-past six in the morning, as the cruisers proceeded to their posts, the *Aboukir* was torpedoed, and began to settle down. Her sister ships believed she had struck a mine, and closed in on her to save life. Suddenly the *Hogue* was struck by two torpedoes, and began to sink. Two of her boats had already been got away to the rescue of the *Aboukir's* men, and as she went down she righted herself for a moment, with the result that her steam pinnace and steam picket-boat floated off. The *Cressy* now came up to the rescue, but she also was struck by two torpedoes, and sank rapidly. Three trawlers in the neighbourhood at the time picked up the survivors in the water and in the boats, but of the total crews of 1,459 officers and men only 779 were saved. In that bright, chilly morning, when all was over within a quarter of an hour, the British sailor showed admirable discipline and courage. Men swimming in the frosty sea or clinging naked to boats or wreckage cheered each other with songs and jokes. The destruction was caused by a single German submarine, the *U29*, a comparatively old type, commanded by Captain Otto Weddigen, of whom the world was to hear more. The loss of the three cruisers was a result of the kind of mistake which is inevitably made at the beginning of a naval war before novel conditions are adequately realized. The senior officer in charge took an undue risk in steering towards the enemy's base in full daylight, unscreened by destroyers, and in proceeding slowly without zigzagging, and with the ships abreast two miles apart. At the same time the Admiralty's general instructions were far from clear, and the three vessels were performing a duty on which it was folly to employ them.

The third method of weakening British sea power was by the attack upon merchantmen by light cruisers. Germany could send forth no new vessels of this type after the outbreak of war, and her activities were confined to those which were already outside the Narrow Seas, especially those under Admiral von Spee's command at Kiao-chau. So far as the present stage is concerned, we need mention only the *Emden* and the *Königsberg*. The former was to provide the world with a genuine tale of romantic adventure, always welcome among the grave realities of war, and in her short life to emulate the achievements and the fame of the *Alabama*. She appeared in the Bay of Bengal on 10th September, and within a week had captured seven large merchantmen, six of which she sank. Next week she arrived at Rangoon, where her presence cut

off all sea communication between India and Burma. On 22nd September she was at Madras, and fired a shell or two into the environs of the city, setting an oil tank on fire. On the 29th she was off Pondicherry, and the last day of the month found her running up the Malabar coast. There for the present we leave her, for the tale of her subsequent adventures belongs to another chapter. The *Königsberg* had her beat off the east coast of Africa. Her chief exploit was a dash into Zanzibar harbour, where, on 20th September, she caught the British light cruiser *Pegasus* while in the act of repairing her boilers. The *Pegasus* was a seventeen-year-old ship of 2,135 tons, and had no chance against her assailant. She was destroyed by the *Königsberg's* long-range fire.

The exploits of the two German commerce-raiders were magnified because they were the exceptions, while the British capture of German merchantmen was the rule. We did not destroy our captures, because we had many ports to take them to, and they were duly brought before our prize courts. In addition, we had made havoc of Germany's converted liners. The *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, which had escaped from Bremerhaven at the beginning of the war, and which had preyed for a fortnight on our South Atlantic commerce, was caught and sunk by the *Highflyer* near the Cape Verde Islands. On 12th September the *Berwick* captured in the North Atlantic the *Spreewald*, of the Hamburg-Amerika line. On 14th September the *Carmania*, Captain Noel Grant, a British converted liner, fell in with a similar German vessel, the *Cap Trafalgar*, off the coast of Brazil. The action began at 9,000 yards, and lasted for an hour and three-quarters. The *Carmania* was skilfully handled, and her excellent gunnery decided the issue. Though the British vessel had to depart prematurely owing to the approach of a German cruiser, she left her antagonist sinking in flames. These instances will suffice to show how active British vessels were in all the seas. The loss of a few light cruisers and a baker's dozen of merchantmen was a small price to pay for an unimpaired foreign trade and the practical impotence of the enemy. Modern inventions give the weaker Power a better chance for raiding than in the old days; but in spite of that our sufferings at this stage were small compared with those in any other of our great wars. It is instructive to contrast our fortunes during the struggle with Napoleon. Then, even after Trafalgar had been fought, French privateers made almost daily captures of English ships in our home waters. Our coasts were frequently attacked, and the inhabitants of the seaboard went for years in constant expecta-



tion of invasion. In the twenty-one years of war we lost 10,248 British ships. Further back in our history our inviolability was even more precarious. In the year after Agincourt the French landed in Portland. Seven years after the defeat of the Armada the Spanish burned Penzance and ravaged the Cornish coasts. In 1667 the Dutch were in the Medway and the Thames. In 1690 the French burned Teignmouth, and landed in Sussex; in 1760 they seized Carrickfergus; in 1797 they landed at Fishguard. In 1775 Paul Jones captured Whitehaven, and was the terror of our home waters. The most prosperous war has its casualties in unexpected places.

The opening stages of the war at sea, though they brought no dramatic *coup*, were of supreme importance in the history of the campaign. A very real crisis had been successfully tided over. Germany had missed a chance which she was never to recover, and her growing difficulties on the Eastern front compelled her for a time to devote as much attention to the Baltic as to the North Sea. The British army had safely crossed the Channel, and the French Algerian forces the Mediterranean. The seas of the world had been cleared of German commerce, and, except for a few stragglers, of German warships. The High Sea Fleet was under close observation, and flanking forces at Harwich, in the Humber, and at Rosyth waited on its appearance, while the Grand Fleet closed the northern exits of the North Sea. The Grand Fleet was as yet without a proper base, and the situation was still full of anxiety for its commander. Jellicoe's steadfastness in those difficult days, his caution which never sank into inaction, his boldness which never degenerated into folly, convinced his countrymen that in him they had the naval leader that the times required. The ill-informed might clamour, but the student of history remembered that it had never been an easy task to bring an enemy fleet to book. In the Revolution Wars, Britain had to wait a year for the first naval battle, Howe's victory of the 1st June; while Nelson lay for two years before Toulon, and Cornwallis for longer before Brest. "They were dull, weary, eventless months"—to quote Admiral Mahan—"those months of waiting and watching of the big ships before the French arsenals. Purposeless they surely seemed to many, but they saved England. The world has never seen a more impressive demonstration of the influence of sea power upon its history. Those far-distant, storm-beaten ships, upon which the Grand Army never looked, stood between it and the dominion of the world."



In Nelson's day Britain had one advantage of which she was now deprived. She was not hampered by a code of maritime law framed in the interests of unmaritime nations. The Declaration of Paris of 1856, among other provisions, enacted that a neutral flag covered enemy's merchandise except contraband of war, and that neutral merchandise was not capturable even under the enemy's flag. This Declaration, which was not accepted by the United States, had never received legislative ratification from the British Parliament; but Britain regarded herself as bound by it, though various efforts had been made to get it rescinded in time of peace by those who realized how greatly it weakened the belligerent force of a sea Power. The Declaration of London of 1909 made a further effort to codify maritime law.\* It was signed by the British plenipotentiaries, though Parliament refused to pass the statutes necessary to give effect to certain of its provisions. In some respects it was more favourable to Britain than the Declaration of Paris, but in others it was less favourable, and it was consistently opposed by most good authorities on the subject. Generally speaking, it was more acceptable to a nation like Germany than to one in Britain's case.† When war broke out the British Government announced that it accepted the Declaration of London as the basis of its maritime practice. The result was a state of dire confusion, for the consequences of the new law had never been fully realized. Under it, for example, the captain of the *Emden* could justify his sinking of British ships instead of taking them to a port for adjudication. One provision, which seems to have been deduced from it, was so patently ridiculous that it was soon dropped—that belligerents (that is, enemy reservists) in

\* Parliamentary Paper, Cd. 4554 of 1909.

† The following are a few examples of the way in which it impaired our naval power: It was made easy to break a blockade, for the right of a blockading Power to capture a blockade-runner did not cover the whole period of her voyage and was confined to ships of the blockading force (Articles 14, 16, 17, 19, 20); stereotyped lists of contraband and non-contraband were drawn up, instead of the old custom of leaving the question to the discretion of the Prize Court (Articles 22, 23, 24, 25, 28); a ship carrying contraband could only be condemned if the contraband formed more than half its cargo; a belligerent warship could destroy a neutral vessel without taking it to a port for judgment; the transfer of an enemy vessel to a neutral flag was presumed to be valid if effected more than thirty days before the outbreak of war (Article 55); the question of the test of enemy property was left in confusion (Article 58); a neutral vessel, if accompanied by any sort of warship of her own flag, was exempt from search; belligerents in neutral vessels on the high seas were exempt from capture (based on Article 45). With the Declaration of London would go most of the naval findings of the Hague Conference of 1907. The British delegates who assented to the Declaration of London proceeded on the assumption that in any war of the future Britain would be neutral, and so endeavoured to reduce the privileges of maritime belligerents.

neutral ships were not liable to arrest. Presently successive Orders in Council, instigated by sheer necessity, altered the Declaration of London beyond recognition. The truth is, that Britain was engaged in so novel a war that many of the older rules could not be applied. Germany had become a law unto herself, and the Allies were compelled in self-defence to frame a new code, which should comply not only with the half-dozen great principles of international equity, but with the mandates of common sense.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

*12th September—3rd October.*

The German Retreat from the Marne—The Aisne Position—The Struggle for the Crossings—The Struggle for the Heights—Joffre extends his Left Wing—The Fighting on the Meuse—The Race to the Sea.

ON the evening of 9th September, in a gale of wind and rain, the right wing of the German armies was in full retreat before Maunoury and French, Foch and Franchet d'Esperey. On the 11th the Fifth Army was in Epernay; on the 12th it was in Rheims, while Foch entered Châlons. That same day Langle had recovered Vitry-le-François and Revigny, and on the 13th the Imperial Crown Prince had fallen back to Montfaucon before Sarrail, who had now recovered his direct communications with the capital. The Battle of the Marne was over, and a new battle was beginning. The Allied armies were too weary to turn Kluck's right flank during his retreat, and Bridoux' 1st Cavalry Corps was unable to do more than threaten his communications. On the 11th the German I. Army was crossing the Aisne, with instructions to protect at all costs the right wing of the German retirement to the new position. Kluck was once again under the orders of Bülow, and to fill the gap between the two, the VII. Army under Heeringen, new come from Alsace, was moving into position. Its 15th Corps was expected by the 13th, its 7th Reserve Corps was hurrying south from Maubeuge, and its 9th Reserve Corps from Belgium. Germany in retreat had lost the offensive, but had snatched again the initiative; she was about to dictate to her enemies the form of the struggle—to compel them to accept a trench battle, well suited to her own stubborn and mechanical genius.

Let us glance at the topography of those wide grassy vales of Aisne and Suippe which are scored from west to east across Northern France. The Aisne, which enters the Oise at Compiègne, has on

its north side, at an average of a mile or more from the stream, a line of steep ridges, the scarp of a great plateau. The valley floor is like much other French scenery—a sluggish stream some fifty yards wide, villages, farmhouses, unfenced fields of crops, poplar-lined roads, and a few little towns, the chief of which is Soissons, with its twelfth-century cathedral, the scene of many great doings in France's history. On the north the hills stand like a wall, and the spurs dip down sharply to the vale, while between them the short and rapid brooks have cut steep re-entrant combes in the plateau's edge. The height of the scarp varies from some 200 feet, where the uplands begin on the west above Compiègne from the forest of Laigue, to more than 450 feet thirty miles east in the high bluffs of Craonne. Beyond this latter place the Aisne takes a wide sweep to the north-east towards its source in the Argonne, and the banks fall to the lower level characteristic of the shallow dales of Champagne. The section from Compiègne to Craonne is everywhere of the same type, with sometimes a bolder spur and sometimes a deeper ravine. The top of the plateau cannot be seen from the valley, nor even from the high ground to the south. It is muffled everywhere by a cloak of woods, which dip over the edge and descend for some distance towards the river. The lower slopes are, for the most part, steep and grassy, with here and there enclosed coppices. The plateau stretches back for some miles till at La Fère and Laon it breaks down into the plains of north-eastern France. Seven miles east of Soissons as the crow flies the river Vesle enters the Aisne on the south bank. It is the stream on which stands the city of Rheims, and its valley is a replica in miniature of the Aisne. At Neufchâtel-sur-Aisne the river Suippe comes in from the south, rolling its muddy white waters through a shallow depression in the chalk of northern Champagne. Both its banks are long, gentle slopes of open ploughland, with a few raw new plantations to break the monotony. Beyond the southern slope and over the watershed we descend to where Rheims lies beautifully in its cincture of bold and forested hills.

The German armies had chosen for their stand, not the line of the Aisne, but the crest of the plateau beyond it, at an average of two miles from the stream side. The place had once been used before as a defensive position by an invader—by Blücher in February and March 1814—and the study of that campaign may have suggested the idea to the German Staff. A more perfect position could not be found. It commanded all the crossings of the river and most of the roads on the south bank, and even if the Allies reached



the north side the outjutting spurs gave excellent opportunities for an enfilading fire. The blindness of the crests made it almost impossible for the German trenches to be detected. Eastward towards Neufchâtel, where the Aisne valley changed its character, the line crossed the river, and followed in a wide curve the course of the Suipe, keeping several miles back from the stream on the northern slopes. Here the position was still stronger. Before them they had a natural glacis, and across the river they could command the bare swelling downs for miles. The line crossed the Champagne-Pouilleuse, with the Bazancourt-Grand-Pré railway behind it, and rested on the Argonne, to the east of which the army of the Imperial Crown Prince was ringing Verdun on north and east from Montfaucon to the shaggy folds of the Woëvre.

At the moment the problem before the German right wing was no easy one. Kluck was instructed to try to serve Maunoury as Maunoury had served him, but he had not the men. He had to watch his right flank in case of a turning movement up the Oise, and in consequence a huge breach appeared between his left and Bülow's right, which the VII. Army had not yet arrived to fill. That space of seven miles was held only by a portion of Richthofen's cavalry. Kluck held in all a line of some twenty-seven miles, and his flanks were precarious. An extra corps, even an extra division, on the Allies' side might have driven him from his ground, with incalculable consequences for the future; had the British 6th Division arrived on the 12th instead of on the 16th the thing might have been done. At that stage every hour was of importance; but by the 15th the gap had been filled, so that in the critical section Franchet d'Esperey's left corps and the British two and a half corps were opposed by five German corps, three of them fresh, and the chance had gone.

When the Allied troops on the 13th and 14th of September first became dimly cognizant of the nature of the German position they did not realize its full meaning. They could not know that they were on the glacis of the new type of fortress which Germany had built for herself, and which was presently to embrace about a fifth of Europe. On the 11th and the 12th they had believed the enemy to be in full retreat, and when they felt his strength their generals were puzzled to decide whether he meant to make a serious stand, or was only fighting delaying actions preparatory to a further retirement to the Sambre or beyond. Had Joffre known the strength of the Aisne positions, he would probably from the beginning have endeavoured to turn them on the west,

or—what would give far more decisive results—to break through the Crown Prince's army in the east, and so get between them and their own country. As it was, he decided to make a frontal attack, which would be the natural course against an enemy in retreat who had merely halted to show his fangs. The fighting on the Aisne was to continue for many weary months, and to show a slow and confusing series of trench attacks sandwiched between long periods of stagnant cannonades. But the First Battle of the Aisne in the strict sense of the word—the battle during which the Allied plan was a frontal assault—lasted for six days only, and on the widest interpretation for no more than a fortnight. It represented a delaying action, while Germany changed from her first to her second plan of campaign.

The first action was one of advanced Allied cavalry and strong German rearguards. On Saturday, 12th September, Maunoury's Sixth Army was in the forest of Compiègne, with its right fronting the enemy in the town of Soissons. It had secured several good artillery positions on the south bank, and spent the day in a long-range duel with the German guns across the river, in the endeavour to "prepare" a crossing. Practically all the bridges were down, and since the Aisne is fully fifteen feet deep, the only transport must be by pontoons. It took some time to capture a German post on the Mont de Paris, south of Soissons. On Maunoury's right the British 3rd Corps was busy at the same task just to the east of Soissons. East of it, again, the two other British corps were advancing in echelon, while the cavalry was driving the enemy from the ground around the lower Vesle. On the day before our cavalry had arrived in the Aisne valley, the 3rd and 5th Brigades just south of Soissons, the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Brigades at Couvrelles and Cerseuil in the tributary glen of the Vesle. On the 12th Allenby discovered that the Germans were holding Braisne and the surrounding heights in some force, and drove them out, and cleared the stream. Shortly after midday the rain began, and our advance in the afternoon was handicapped by transport difficulties in the heavy soil. In the evening the 1st Corps lay between Vauxcéré and Vauxtin; the 2nd astride the Vesle from Brenelle to near Missy, where the 5th Division on its left found the Aisne crossing strongly held; the 3rd Corps south of Soissons, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Buzancy, while its heavy batteries were assisting Maunoury. East of the British, Franchet d'Esperey brought his army up to the Vesle, and Langle was moving down the upper Suippe. The fighting around Verdun

must be left till later, for it did not belong to the present series of engagements.

Sunday, the 13th, was the beginning of the passage of the Aisne. The French Sixth Army constructed pontoons at various places under a heavy fire, and several divisions were got over. Vic and Fontenoy were the chief crossings, for a pontoon bridge at Soissons itself was made impossible by the guns on the northern heights. A number of French infantry did succeed in making a passage by means of the single girder which was all that was now left of the narrow-gauge railway bridge. To the east the British operations during the day were full of interest. The 3rd Corps attempted the section between Soissons and Venizel. The Aisne was in high flood, and the heavy rain made every movement difficult. Its bridging train attempted to build a heavy pontoon bridge on the French right, but this failed, like the similar French attempt, owing to the fire of the German howitzers. At Venizel there was a road bridge, not completely destroyed, which was mended sufficiently to allow of the passage of field guns. A pontoon bridge was built beside it, and early in the afternoon the whole of the 4th Division was across, and co-operating with the left of the 2nd Corps against the German positions at Chivres and Vregny. Farther east the 2nd Corps had been in difficulties. The 5th Division on its left found the open space between the river and the heights opposite Missy a death-trap from the German guns. Its 13th Brigade could not advance, but its 14th and 15th Brigades succeeded in crossing by means of rafts between Missy and Venizel, and took up positions around the village of Ste. Marguerite. The 3rd Division had a still harder task. One of its brigades, the 8th, managed to cross at Vailly; but the 9th and 7th Brigades, making the attempt at Condé, found the bridge there still standing, and in German hands. This bridge remained in the possession of the Germans long after the British forces were on the north bank, a point of danger between the two divisions of the 2nd Corps. The British 1st Corps, with some of the cavalry, was concerned with the section between Chavonne and Bourg. Here there were both the river and a canal on the south bank to be passed, and not only was there heavy shell-fire to be faced from the northern heights, but most of the possible crossing-places were guarded by strong detachments of German infantry with machine guns. The 2nd Division was in trouble from the start. Only one battalion of Cavan's 4th (Guards) Brigade succeeded in crossing in boats at Chavonne, while the 5th Brigade crossed by the broken girders

of the bridge at Pont-Arcy, where the flooded river washed over their precarious foothold. The 1st Division crossed principally by the aqueduct which carried a small canal over the Aisne at Bourg, and which by some miracle was weakly held, while an advanced body of infantry preceded them by pontoons. By the evening it had occupied the positions of Paissy, Moulins, and Vendresse, on the northern bank.

On the evening of that difficult Sunday we may summarize the situation by saying that, on the fifteen miles of front allotted to the British, they had crossed the river at most points, and had entrenched themselves well up the farther slopes. Only the 19th Brigade of the 3rd Corps, and of the 2nd Corps the 4th (three battalions), 6th, 7th, 9th, and 13th Brigades bivouacked on the southern bank. The British army has been familiar with difficult river crossings—like the Alma, the Modder, and the Tugela—but never before had it forced a passage so quickly in the face of so great and so strongly posted an enemy. High honour was won by our artillery, working under desperate conditions, and most notably by the Royal Engineers, who wrought with all the coolness they had once shown at the Delhi Gate, and went on calmly with their work of flinging across pontoon bridges and repairing damaged girders in places where it seemed that no human being could live.

During the night of the 13th, while the German searchlights played upon the sodden riverside fields, Joffre decided that the following day must be made to reveal the nature of the German plans. Accordingly on the 14th, while the engineers were busy strengthening the new bridges and repairing some of the old for heavy traffic, a general advance was begun along the whole western section of the front. Maunoury carried the line of the river between Compiègne and Soissons, and attacked vigorously right up to the edges of the plateau. From Vic his Zouaves advanced up the deep cleft of Morsain through St. Christophe, and seized the villages of Autrèches and Nouvron on the containing spurs. By the evening, or early the next morning, he had won his way far up the heights, and was suddenly brought up against the main German position on the plateau itself. There he found himself held, and of all the Allied commanders was the first to realize the nature of the defensive trenches which the enemy had prepared. The fate of the British 3rd and 2nd Corps was much the same. The 4th Division could make no advance on the Bucy uplands between Vregny and Chivres because of the merciless shell-fire from the hidden German trenches. The 5th Division was in like case north of Condé, and the 3rd



Division, which made a gallant attempt to advance on Aizy, was driven back to its old ground at Vailly. Everywhere as soon as they felt the enemy they began to dig themselves in on the slopes—their first real experience of a task which was soon to become their staple military duty.

The chief offensive was entrusted to Sir Douglas Haig's 1st Corps, which, as we have seen, was mostly on the northern bank between Chavonne and Moulins, where to the east begins the first lift of the Craonne plateau. It was directed to cross the line Moulins-Moussy by 7 a.m., a section where the northern heights are more withdrawn from the Aisne. A widish glen opens out at Pont-Arcy, and up it runs the little canal which, as we have seen, crossed the river at Bourg. This canal presently disappears in a tunnel in the hillside. In all these ravines there are little villages and rock dwellings, where live the men employed in the limekilns and the plaster quarries. Four miles to the north an important highway, the Chemin des Dames, runs east and west along the plateau. It is the main upper road along the Aisne valley to Craonne, and runs parallel, at an average distance of three miles, with the lower road along the riverside. From it the traveller has a wide prospect as far north as the heights of Laon. If it could be seized it would give command of the southern plateau from Soissons to Berry-au-Bac. It was towards this line that Sir Douglas Haig directed his efforts. The action began before dawn on the 14th with a movement by the advance guard of the 1st Division—the 2nd Brigade—from Moulins to the hamlet of Troyon, south of the Chemin des Dames. There was a sugar factory there strongly held by the enemy, which by midday was captured with the assistance of the 1st Brigade. The two brigades were now drawn up on a line north of Troyon and just south of the Chemin des Dames. There they were close to the enemy's main entrenchments, and could make no headway for his fire. The day was wet and misty, and this dulled the precision of the artillery on both sides. The 3rd Brigade continued the line west of Vendresse, and linked up with the 2nd Division.

The 2nd Division found itself in heavy waters from the outset. Many of its battalions, it must be remembered, had still to cross the Aisne when the morning broke. Its 6th Brigade, which should have seized a point on the Chemin des Dames south of Courtecon, was hung up just south of Braye, and had to be supported by two howitzer brigades and a heavy battery. The 4th (Guards) Brigade, aiming at Ostel, fought its way through the thick dripping woods,

where very little aid could be got from our artillery, and by one o'clock was close on the Ostel ridge. Here the Germans counter-attacked in force, and for some time it looked as if they might turn the left flank of the Guards and cut the communications of the 3rd Division at Vailly. Sir John French had no reserves available except Allenby's cavalry; but since the British trooper is also a mounted infantryman, and can fight with a rifle as well as with a sabre, the cavalry proved sufficient. Sir Douglas Haig used part of Allenby's division, chiefly the 1st Brigade, to prolong the left flank of the Guards, and after some hard fighting repelled the German attack. About four in the afternoon the commander of the 1st Corps ordered a general advance. From then till daylight departed there was a heavy engagement, which resulted in a clear British success. At nightfall they held, not indeed the Chemin des Dames, but a position which ran from a point on the north-east of Troyon, through Troyon and Chivy to La Cour de Soupir, while the cavalry carried it down to the Soissons road west of Chavonne. The whole day's work was well conceived and brilliantly executed, and gave the Allies for the first time an entrenched position on the plateau itself.

On the day before Franchet d'Esperey's Fifth Army had in large part crossed the Aisne east of Bourg, and on the 14th the first assault began on the Craonne plateau. On the evening of that day the eastern flank of the British 1st Corps was safeguarded by French Moroccan battalions, which entrenched themselves in echelon on its right rear. The Germans held the river crossing at Berry-au-Bac, an important point, for there the highroad runs from Rheims to Laon. Along the Suippe the Ninth Army was feeling the German strength in the impregnable trenches on the northern slopes, and finding it so great that the advance checked. Farther east in north Champagne, Langle's Fourth Army had occupied Souain, and, like its colleague to the west, was becoming aware of the fortress in which the enemy had found shelter. At the moment, however, the German High Command was greatly perturbed. No intelligible orders came from Great Headquarters, and Bülow, who had the direction of the main battle, was preparing to fall back on La Fère; it was his habit to see defeat before he was beaten. But in the night the first reserves arrived, and on the 15th came the news that the 9th Reserve Corps had come to strengthen Kluck's endangered right.

That day, Tuesday the 15th, saw an enemy reaction, a series of violent counter-attacks along the western front. Maunoury's Sixth Army was the chief sufferer. From their main position

at Nampcel the Germans drove the French out of their posts on the crests of the spurs, recaptured Autrèches, and forced the French right out of the Morsain ravine and off the spurs of Nouvron. By the Wednesday morning the French were back on a line close to the Aisne, and only a few hundred yards north of their original crossing-places at Vic and Fontenoy. Soissons was heavily shelled, and all the northern part of the town was gutted by fire. The French left, however, continued its flanking movement up the Oise on the west side of the forest of Laigue, and on this day made considerable progress in the direction of Noyon, where, however, it was suddenly checked by the arrival of the 9th Reserve Corps. On the British left the 4th Division of the 3rd Corps was severely handled, but stood stoutly to the ground it had won south of Vregny. The 5th Division felt the weight of the same onslaught, and was enfiladed on its left by the German fire from Vregny, and could not advance in face of the heavy artillery posted north of Chivres and Condé. In the evening it was forced back almost to the line of the stream, and held the ground between Missy and Ste. Marguerite—a line dominated everywhere by the guns on the heights. The 3rd Division on its right was more fortunate, for it advanced from Vailly, and retook the high ground from which it had been evicted the day before. Haig on the right had a long day of counter-attacks, which he succeeded in repulsing, and the 4th (Guards) Brigade in particular gave the enemy much punishment. By the evening the British line was fairly comfortable, except for the precarious situation of the 4th and 5th Divisions.

Next day, the 16th, there was a sudden lull on the British front. Sir John French had contemplated a second attack on the Chemin des Dames, which would give relief to the hard-pressed 4th and 5th Divisions; but the news from Franchet d'Esperey convinced him that it would be highly dangerous. For the French Fifth Army had found the enemy on the Craonne plateau too strong for them, and the Moroccan battalions, echeloned on the British right, had fallen back, and so left that flank in the air. Accordingly the 6th Division, which had arrived that morning from England, was kept in reserve on the south bank of the Aisne, instead of being sent to support the 1st Corps in a forward movement.

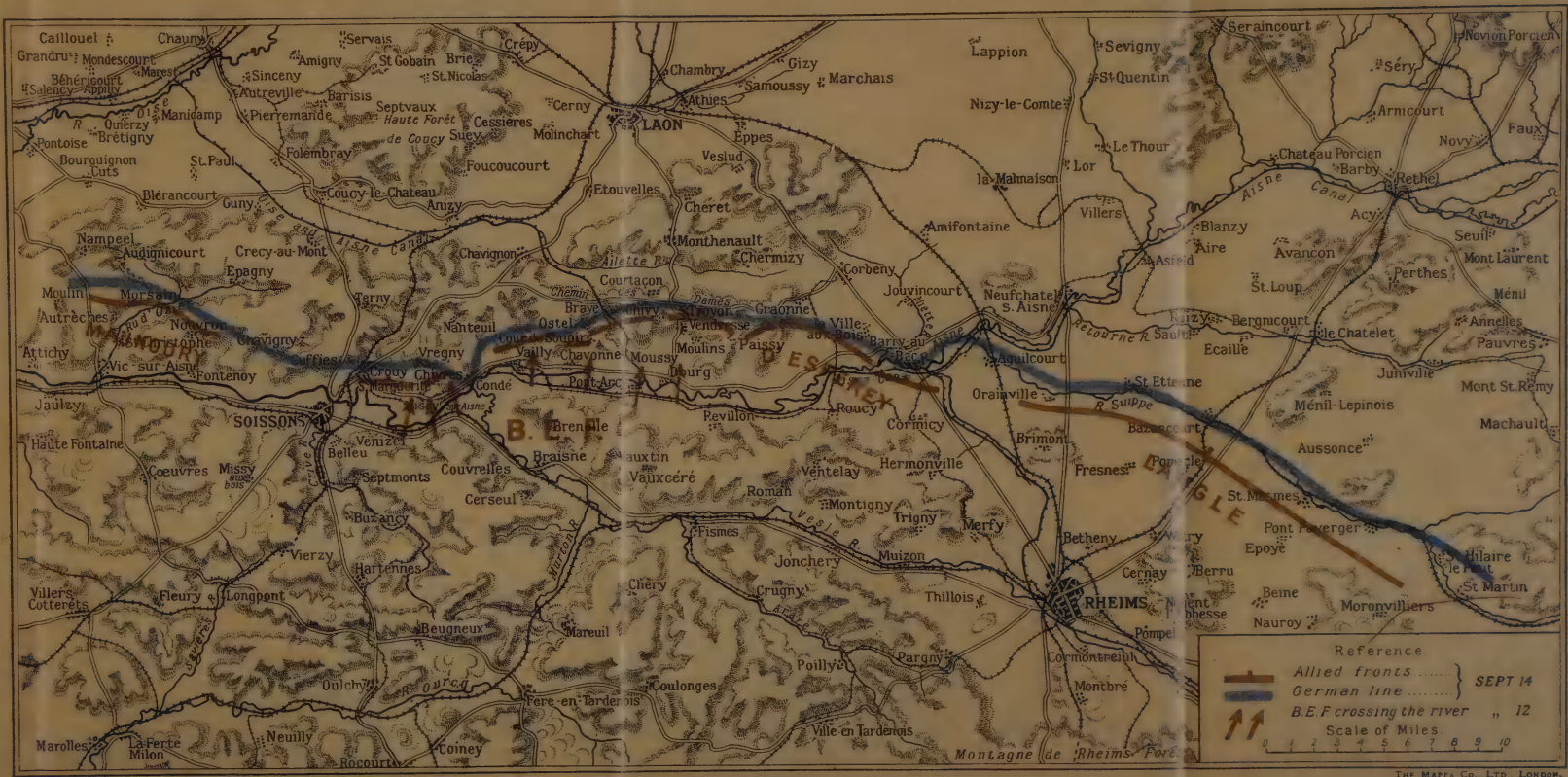
But on the 17th events moved more swiftly. Maunoury had received reinforcements, and the right of the French Sixth Army checked the German attack, and won back all the ground they had lost. They drove the Germans right back from the edge of the

plateau to their main position behind Nampcel, and in particular cleared them out of the quarries of Autrèches, which had given them deadly gun positions. This French success eased the situation of the British 4th and 5th Divisions, and the centre of our line was left in peace. Not so our 1st Division, perched high up on the plateau at Troyon, and looking towards the Chemin des Dames, which spent an unceasing day of attacks and counter-attacks. Farther to the east the French Fifth Army was still assaulting in vain the Craonne plateau, and the Ninth Army had fallen back from the Suippe to just outside Rheims. The Germans were now on the hills north of that city, and were able to pour shells into it. The heights of Brimont were won by them, and though the French made desperate efforts to retake them, and for a moment looked like succeeding, they continued to hold the ground. These heights were only 9,000 yards from the city. More important still, they had worked round the French position on the east, and had won the hill of Nogent-l'Abbesse, though the French remained in possession of Pompelle, the southern spur. Here the German advance stopped, for west of Rheims lay the high wooded ground of Pouillon, and south the heights known as the Montagne de Rheims, both old prepared positions for the defence of the Marne. The battle here resolved itself into the artillery duel which was to last for months, and which played havoc with that noblest monument of French Gothic, the cathedral of Rheims. Farther east, Langle's army held its own, but made little progress. It was still some three miles short of the Bazancourt-Grand-Pré railway, and had cause for anxiety about its communications with Foch. One last event of the 17th must be recounted. Bridoux' 1st Cavalry Corps, operating from Roye, made a brilliant raid as far east as Ham and St. Quentin, during which its commander fell.

On the next day there was little doing in the daytime, but at night there was a general attack on the 1st and 2nd British Divisions. Elsewhere Maunoury was striving fruitlessly against Kluck's position, and his left was pressed back by the German 9th Reserve Corps; Franchet d'Esperey was beating in vain on the Craonne escarpment; Foch's army was hard pressed at Rheims; and Langle found the Württembergers in Champagne a barrier which he could not break. This Friday, 18th September, may be taken as the end of the Battle of the Aisne in its strict sense, for it marked the conclusion of the attempt of the Allies to break down the German positions by a frontal attack. Five days' fighting had convinced



THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE AISNE.  
(Facing p. 27B.)



THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE AISNE.  
1918



them that here was no halting-place for a rearguard action, but the long-thought-out defences of an army ready and willing for battle. The forces were too evenly matched to produce anything better than stalemate, and continued assaults upon those hidden batteries would only lead to a useless waste of life. The Allies might win a spur here and there, but they would find, as Napoleon found at Craonne, that the capture of peninsulas of land was idle when the enemy held the main plateau in strength. Their only plan was to dig themselves in and creep towards the German lines in a slow campaign of sap and mine. By the 18th they had got ready their trenches, and were settling down to this novel warfare.

The general situation was strategically bad. The enemy, from whom they hoped that they had wrested the offensive at the Marne, was beginning to recover it. Bülow's attack on Rheims was a dangerous blow at their centre, and if Langle failed in Champagne the Allied front might be pierced in a vital spot. The determined assault upon Verdun, which we shall presently consider, was also a ground for uneasiness. Fortress was now an anxious word in French ears. Sarrail had none too many men, and if the Imperial Crown Prince, aided by the Bavarians, could break through the Heights of the Meuse the Allied right would be turned, and a clear road laid open for the invaders from Metz and the Rhine.

The situation demanded a counter-offensive which should promise more speedy results than a frontal assault upon the Aisne plateau. Accordingly, as early as 16th September, Joffre changed his strategy. He resolved to play the German game, fling out his line to the west, and attempt to envelop Kluck's right. Such a movement, if successful, would threaten the chief German communications by the great trunk line of the Oise valley, and if it could be pushed as far as La Fère, or even as far as the junction of Tergnier, would compel the retreat of the whole German right. Accordingly, orders were given for two new armies to form on Maunoury's left, aligning themselves in an angle to the north-west. The first was the reconstructed Second Army, under Castelnau, who for the purpose surrendered his command in Lorraine to Dubail.\* On its left was to be formed the Tenth Army, under General Louis Maud'huy, a man of fifty-seven, who was best known as Professor of Military History at the École de Guerre. At the beginning of the war he was only a brigadier, commanding a brigade in the Army of Lorraine. In three weeks he had passed through

\* Dubail now held the front from Belfort to Nancy with 350,000 men. After 25th September he commanded all French troops west of the Meuse.



the stages of divisional general and corps commander to army commander—a rapidity of promotion which can scarcely be paralleled from the Napoleonic wars.

For the three weeks on from Friday, 18th September, the Battle of the Aisne, so far as Maunoury and French were concerned, degenerated into a sullen trench warfare, with no possibility of any great movement. Both sides were in position and under cover. Sporadic attacks had to be faced, especially by the British 1st Division at Troyon, and there were many counter-attacks, by which more than once the advanced German trenches were won. But, generally speaking, these weeks showed few incidents. The worst fighting was over by the 18th, and we had now acquired the trick of this strange burrowing. But if the gravest peril had gone, the discomfort remained. The first two weeks at the Aisne were one long downpour. To them succeeded a week of St. Martin's summer, and then came autumn damp and mist. On the sides of the plateau the chalky mud seemed bottomless. It filled the ears and eyes and throats of the men, it plastered their clothing, and mingled generously with their diet. Their grandfathers who had been at Sebastopol could have told the British soldiers something about mud; but after India and South Africa the mire of the Aisne seemed a grievous affliction. The day was soon to come when the same men in West Flanders sighed for the Aisne as a dry and salubrious habitation. Our trenches were for the most part well up on the slopes of the plateau. Sometimes, as at Troyon, they were pushed close up to and in full view of the enemy's position; but generally the latter was concealed behind the crest of the ridge, and on flanking spurs which enfiladed ours. Great assistance in locating the enemy was given by our airmen; but we suffered from a chronic lack of artillery. Not only had the Germans far more pieces than we had, but they had their big 8-inch howitzers from Maubeuge, and they seemed to have an endless supply of machine guns. Our artillery had to give most of its time to keeping down the German gun-fire, and in this arm we could rarely take the offensive. The bombardment which the Allies endured was, therefore, far more incessant and torturing than any they could inflict on the enemy. On 23rd September the four 6-inch howitzer batteries which Sir John French had asked for from England arrived at the Aisne, and the British were able to make some return in kind; but for every shell of this type which they could fire the Germans fired twenty.



During these weeks the French armies of the centre and left had a difficult task, and the hardest was that of Sarrail's army around Verdun. That great fortress, as we have seen, had been menaced by the Imperial Crown Prince during the Battle of the Marne, and his left wing had bombarded Fort Troyon from the high ground to the west of the Meuse. In the general German retreat on 10th-12th September he had retired north of Verdun, and his right no longer lay at Ste. Menehould, commanding the pass of Les Islettes and the main railway from Verdun, but had fallen back two days' march almost as far north as the pass of Grand-Pré, which was the terminus of the branch line from Bazancourt. Verdun was promptly cleared by the French general of most of the *bouches inutiles*, its civilian inhabitants. Seven thousand were ordered out of the town, a tariff for foodstuffs was drawn up, and everything was made ready for a prolonged siege. But Sarrail was determined that it should be no siege in the ordinary sense, and that the German howitzers should never be permitted within range. By earthworks and entrenchments the fortified zone was largely extended. The lines of the Crown Prince found themselves brought to a halt in a semicircle, with their right on the Argonne at Varennes, passing northward by Montfaucon and Consenvoye, and joining up with the German army in the Woëvre.

At the Battle of the Marne the only German attacking force in this district had been that of the Crown Prince. In the Woëvre the Bavarian right had been engaged with the Toul garrison, but the Bavarians had enough to do with Castelnau at Nancy, and had no leisure to spare for the Heights of the Meuse. About the 20th of September, however, a new army detachment appeared in the Woëvre. It was commanded by von Strantz, and consisted of four South German corps, mainly Würtembergers. They were reserve corps, the 3rd, 10th, 13th, and 16th, and they had with them several reserve divisions. Sarrail had opposed to him not less than seven corps, comprised in the Crown Prince's and Strantz's commands, and his original army was greatly outnumbered. He received the better part of an army corps from Toul as reinforcements, but he fought throughout against heavy odds, relying on the natural and artificial strength of the French position.

A word must be said on the nature of the Meuse defences between Verdun and Toul. First after the Verdun ring came the fort of Génicourt; then Fort Troyon; then the Camp des Romains, protecting the bridge at St. Mihiel, and crossing fire with Fort

Paroches on the west side of the river ; then Fort Liouville ; then various southern works which need not be specified, for they were never assaulted. The obvious centre of attack was Fort Troyon, for it commanded the biggest gap in the chain. About 20th September a second attempt was made on it, when Strantz, advancing from the base at Thiaucourt on a broad front, delivered a strong attack, but was repulsed by the French army on the heights. The fort had suffered heavily from the first assault, and the second practically destroyed it. It says much for the garrison that, till relief came, they continued to hold out in what was little more than a dust-heap. This, however, was only a reconnaissance in force. The real attack was delivered four days later, and directed against the little town of St. Mihiel, which lies on the Meuse, midway between Toul and Verdun. The eastern bank is a plateau some 300 feet high above the Meuse, rising to a greater height in various summits, and falling steeply in the east to the deep ravines and wooded knolls of the Woëvre. The spur of the plateau, due east of Troyon, is called Hattonchâtel, and here the Germans established a footing on 23rd September, and got up their heavy artillery. They silenced the small fort of Paroches across the Meuse, and presently silenced and destroyed the Camp des Romains, and took St. Mihiel with its bridgehead on the western side of the water.

They got no farther, for a French cavalry detachment drove in the van of the advance, and compelled them to entrench themselves on the edge of the river. The German aim was clear. They hoped to push from St. Mihiel due west to Revigny, and so get south of Sarrail's army, which would thus be caught between Strantz and the Crown Prince. Sarrail had enough and only just enough men to prevent this, and for a day or two the issue hung in the balance. But with every day the German position grew more uncomfortable. They had pierced the fortress line Toul-Verdun, but they could not use the path through the gap. They had no railway behind them nearer than Thiaucourt, and only one road, and that a bad one, for the main route through Apremont was held by the French. In the autumn fogs which cloak the Woëvre it was a bad line of communications, and it says much for German tenacity that they managed to hold St. Mihiel for years against all comers. Meantime the Toul garrison sent out troops which fought their way to the southern edge of the Rupt de Mad, the narrow glen by which the railway runs from Metz to Thiaucourt. The fighting east of the Meuse was presently

transformed into that war of entrenchments which we have seen beginning on the Aisne. One last effort to secure a decision was made in this district before stalemate set in. On Saturday, 3rd October, the Crown Prince made a vigorous assault upon Sarrail's centre, which lay roughly from south of Varennes to just north of Verdun. Varennes at the moment was in German hands. The Crown Prince attempted a turning movement through the woods of the Argonne against Ste. Menehould, his former headquarters. A forest road runs from Varennes west to Vienne on the upper Aisne, and north of this lies the wood of La Grurie, through which the Germans brought their guns. In the pass the French fell upon them, and after sharp fighting on the Sunday drove them back north of Varennes, capturing that town, and gaining the road across the Argonne, which gave them touch with the right of Langle's Fourth Army. This victory straightened out the French front, which now ran from Verdun due west to north of Souain, and then along the Roman road to Rheims.

The prevailing stalemate was most marked in North Champagne. Langle had made no head against the Würtembergers. His object was the Bazancourt-Grand-Pré railway; but the German trenches in the flat pockets and along the endless chalk hillocks of Champagne held him fast. He maintained his ground, and the danger of the effort to pierce the line at this point was temporarily removed, largely because of the extensive readjustment of forces which was then going on behind the German front. Farther east the German army around Rheims had better success. The shelling of the city began on Friday the 18th, and for ten days the bombardment continued. There was much loss of life among the civilians, large sections of the city were burnt and demolished, and the cathedral, though its walls remained standing, lost much of its adornment, including its ancient stained-glass windows, its delicate stone carving, and portions of its towers. The shelling of Rheims cathedral was one of the acts of vandalism which most scandalized the feelings of the civilized world. The German plea—that the French had erected signal stations on the roof and tower, and gun stations close to the building—cannot be substantiated, and the business was made worse by the fact that the interior was being used as a hospital, and the Red Cross flag was flown. It is hard to see what military excuse could be put forward for this senseless destruction. The cathedral did not suffer indirectly through being in the zone of fire; the German guns were deliberately

trained on it.\* Only when it was discovered that neutral nations were seriously shocked was the tale of hostile gun-platforms invented. To the French it appeared a happy omen that the statue of Joan of Arc, which stood in front of the cathedral, was uninjured. Round it the Uhlans had stacked their lances when they first entered the city on their way to the Marne. During the bombardment, though the square around was ploughed up by shells and her horse's legs were chipped and scarred, the figure of the Maid remained inviolate. Some soldiers had placed a tricolour in her outstretched hand, and in all these days of smoke and terror the French flag was held aloft by the arm of France's deliverer. About the 28th the worst fury of the attack was over. The change in the German dispositions compelled them to call a halt, and of this slackening the French took immediate advantage. The Germans had seized a position at La Neuville, on the slopes towards Brimont, two miles north of Rheims, which gave them a dangerous mastery over the French lines, and might form a starting-point for a piercing movement. On the evening of the 28th the French counter-attacked, and in spite of heavy fire drove the enemy back to Brimont. That same evening saw a general movement along the whole French front in this section, and one battalion of the Prussian Guard was completely destroyed. The important position of Prunay, on the railway between Rheims and Châlons, was carried, and the danger of a wedge between the Ninth and Fourth Armies was removed.

Meantime the Fifth Army had no success in the Craonne district. The vital crossing at Berry-au-Bac, where runs the Roman road from Rheims to Laon, was still in German hands. Franchet d'Esperey in vain struggled towards Craonne village. His African troops fought with the utmost gallantry; he had certain minor victories and reported a number of prisoners; but he never won the edge of the plateau or came near the German main position. As in the British section, the French won the spurs and ramparts, but were brought up short before the citadel.

\* "It is of no consequence if all the monuments ever created, all the pictures ever painted, and all the buildings ever erected by the great architects of the world were destroyed, if by their destruction we promote Germany's victory over her enemies. . . . The commonest, ugliest stone placed to mark the burial-place of a German grenadier is a more glorious and perfect monument than all the cathedrals in Europe put together. . . . Let neutral peoples and our enemies cease their empty chatter, which is no better than the twittering of birds. Let them cease their talk about the cathedral at Rheims and about all the churches and castles of France which have shared its fate. These things do not interest us."—Major-General von Ditfurth in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, November 1914.



The true offensive of the Allies, as we have seen, was now on the extreme left, where Maunoury had extended his flank up the Oise, and the armies of Castelnau and Maud'huy were lengthening the line towards the north. By the 20th of September Castelnau had established himself south of Lassigny, a day's march from the Oise and the railway line. On the 22nd he advanced, but in severe fighting between the 25th and 28th he was forced back from Chaulnes and Roye. In the last week of September, Maud'huy's Tenth Army was engaged in a struggle for the Albert plateau. He never attained it, and when the fighting ceased his line lay well to the west of Bapaume, and behind the upper Ancre—a situation which was to be of vital importance two years later. But, as his divisions came up, his left went on extending till presently it covered Arras and Lens, and on 3rd October his left corps, the 21st, was three miles west of Lille. The French left now ran for seventy miles north of Compiègne, almost to the Belgian frontier. It was a comprehensive piece of outflanking, and it bent back the German right from its apex on the heights above the forest of Laigue in the shape of a gigantic L. A little more pressure, and it looked as if the angle might be made so acute that the great Oise railway would be uncovered and the main line of German communications on the west made untenable. If that happened there must be a general retirement; for, though the Germans had other lines of supply, they had none which could keep their right and right-centre rapidly fed with the vast quantities of heavy ammunition on which the holding of their Aisne position depended.

But presently it appeared that this flanking strategy was being met by another. The Germans were themselves taking the offensive, and stretching out their right, not to conform with, but to outstrip our movement. It was becoming a race for the northern sea.

As early as 16th September, Sir John French had become anxious about his position, and had reached the conclusion that the British army was in the wrong place. At Mons it had been the extreme left, now it was almost the centre of the Allied line. This meant constant difficulties with supplies and communications, for these now ran through Paris to the Atlantic coast, and so crossed those of Maunoury, Castelnau, and Maud'huy. If, on the other hand, the British were transferred once more to the left wing, they could draw upon the Channel ports, and would be within easy reach of home. This in itself was sufficient

reason for the change, but there were others not less cogent. The stalemate on the Aisne had become chronic. Both sides were securely entrenched, and territorial levies might be trusted to hold the line. It seemed a waste of good material that a seasoned professional army should be kept at a task which might with perfect safety be entrusted to men less fully trained. Above all, the British Commander-in-Chief saw the dawning of a dangerous German offensive, directed especially against Britain, and aiming at the possession of Calais and the Channel ports. News was arriving that the great fortress of Antwerp was in extremity, and, once it fell, a fresh army could be hurled at the gap between Lille and the sea. A campaign is full of surprises, and this one had by now taken on the character of a siege. Germany had been forced to accept the position, and was penned behind a line of entrenchments running in the West from Lille to Switzerland, and in the East from the East Prussian frontier to the Carpathians. There was a huge area inside the lines—about one-fifth of Europe—but it was a closing area, and might soon be finally sealed up. It was not the kind of campaign we would have chosen, but since it had developed in this way it was our business to take out of it the best advantage. The one sally-port was West Flanders, and without delay that bolt-hole must be stopped.

His conclusion was strengthened by news of a new German disposition which revealed the gravity of their projected offensive. On 14th September, Erich von Falkenhayn, the Minister of War, had succeeded the younger Moltke as Chief of the General Staff.\* The reason given was Moltke's health, which had become bad; but it is likely that in any case the result of the Battle of the Marne would have compelled a change. The new Chief of Staff was a man of remarkable ability, comparatively young, vigorous and original in ideas, and with a mind which could envisage the struggle in its political, naval, and economic, as well as in its military aspects. He began by transferring Great Headquarters from Luxembourg to Charleville, on the Meuse, opposite Mézières. In reviewing the situation he saw that there was an instant danger of envelopment unless the German right flank could rest on the sea. Again, without the command of the Belgian coast, the German submarine campaign would be crippled. There was another reason which weighed much with him. He was firmly convinced that in the West and in the West alone a decision could be reached.

\* Till January 1915, when he was succeeded at the War Office by Wild von Hohenborn, Falkenhayn filled both posts.

Since the original plan had failed another must be found, and the most promising was an attack by the right, which, even if it did not succeed in enveloping the Allies, might bring the northern coast of France and the control of the Channel into German hands. Accordingly, the flower of the German troops was given orders for the north. In Alsace and Lorraine were left only detachments under Gaede and Falkenhausen. Strantz was entrusted with the Verdun area and the St. Mihiel salient. The Imperial Crown Prince remained where he had been, and the III. Army, now under von Einem, held Champagne. Heeringen's VII. Army replaced Bülow on the heights of the Aisne, and Kluck held the angle of the front on the Oise. North of him Bülow's II. Army was moved to face Castelnau and Maud'huy's right, while the VI. Army of Bavaria was sent to the country around Arras and Lille. Most significant of all, the Duke of Württemberg was marching to the extreme right with his IV. Army, heavily reinforced, to open the one gate that remained.

These changes, which were partially known to the Allied Staff, reinforced Sir John French's case. On 29th September he formally approached Joffre, and on 1st October the French Commander-in-Chief accepted the plan. He brought up reserves to take the place of the British, and arranged for the creation of a new Eighth Army under General d'Urbal to support the left of the line. He also took Foch, whose reputation was now the most brilliant of all the army commanders', and put him in general charge of the operations north of Noyon. The French and British Staffs worked in perfect concord, and the result was a brilliant piece of transport. The whole thing was done without noise or friction. Gough's 2nd Cavalry Division \* was the first to go on 3rd October, and the three infantry corps followed from left to right, till on the 19th the 1st Corps detrained at St. Omer. Some of our soldiers passed near enough to the Channel to see the vessels of the senior service out on the grey waters.

We won the race to the sea, but only by the narrowest margin. The Germans' sally was stronger than we had dreamed, and a host of new corps, of which the investing force from Antwerp was only a small part, was about to pour westward over the Flanders flats. How the pass was held will be the subject of a later chapter. The movement of the British northward marked the end of the second phase of the war. In the first, which ended before the

\* The cavalry was now organized in divisions, and the first two formed the cavalry corps under Allenby.

Marne, the Allies were on the defensive before the great German "out-march." In the second, which included the Battles of the Marne and the Aisne, they had the offensive; but after the defeat of the Marne the Germans regained the initiative, and compelled the Allies to accept the kind of battle they had chosen. Presently the Allies changed their plans, and endeavoured to hoist the enemy with his own petard, the enveloping movement; but, while seeking to envelop him, they found themselves in danger of envelopment. He was soon to possess himself of both the initiative and the offensive, and in the dark winter months his opponents replied with the very strategy he had practised on the Aisne, and dug themselves into trenches from which he could not oust them.

Sir John French, when he began the march to the sea, thought less of defence than attack. He expected that in a few weeks he would have under him a force of ten infantry and four cavalry divisions, with which to turn the German right; but if that was to be achieved there must be a flank to be turned. It was essential that the Duke of Würtemberg should not reach the sea, and that Ostend, Zeebrugge, and Antwerp should remain in the Allies' hands. The Marine Brigade of the British Royal Naval Division had arrived at Ostend on 20th September. Joffre was willing to send a Territorial division and Ronarc'h's brigade of Fusiliers Marins, and the British 7th Infantry and 3rd Cavalry Divisions were waiting ready in England. It seemed incredible that with all these potential supports, and with only Beseler's small besieging army against them, the Belgians should not be able to maintain their ground long enough to let the British army of attack swing eastward along the coast. But Falkenhayn was determined to clear forthwith this menace from his flank, and, because he could act with an undivided mind, he won. On 2nd October, Sir John French to his alarm heard from Kitchener that Antwerp was in imminent danger, and on the 9th came the news of its fall.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE FALL OF ANTWERP.

*28th September—10th October.*

The Antwerp Defences—The Belgian Sortie—The Siege opens—Arrival of British Naval Division—Lord Kitchener's Plan—The Last Hours of the City.

VISITORS to Antwerp in the June before the outbreak of war found a city settled and comfortable and decorous, full of ease and prosperous busyness, and all the signs of an interminable peace. She had had stormy episodes in her history. She had been the object in 1576 of that sack and massacre which is called "the Spanish Fury"; she had been captured by Parma; the Treaty of Munster in 1648 had closed the Scheldt and broken her prosperity; in 1832 she had been taken by the French and Belgians, and the Dutch general Chassé had bombarded her streets from the citadel. But she bore no sign of this restless past. In the seventeenth century a Venetian envoy had reported that more business was done at her wharves in a fortnight than in Venice during the year, and in the last four decades she had recovered her commercial pre-eminence. With a population of between 300,000 and 400,000, and an annual trade of more than £100,000,000 sterling, she was one of the largest and richest ports of the world. Her broad streets and her handsome buildings, with the delicate spire of her great cathedral soaring into the heavens, made her one of the comeliest of European cities. Museums, libraries, and many halls and public buildings testified to her wealth and the variety of her interests. If a man had been asked to name a city from which fighting seemed infinitely remote—which seemed the very shrine of peace and the citadel of that *bourgeois* civilization which it was fondly hoped had made war impossible—the odds are that Antwerp would have been chosen.

We have seen how, when Brussels was threatened, the Belgian Court and Government had retired inside the Antwerp lines, and

how during the first fortnight of September the Belgian army had made several gallant sallies against the German troops of occupation. The main object of these efforts was to relieve the pressure on the Allies in France, but another motive was in the minds of the Belgian Staff. Sooner or later it was certain that the Germans would make an attempt upon the city, and the lessons of Liége and Namur were beginning to be understood. The great howitzers must not be allowed to come within range of the forts, and the Belgian lines of defence must be far to the south, beyond the Nethe, and along the roads from Malines to Louvain and Brussels. By 17th September they had been driven back from the line of the Malines-Louvain railway. By 25th September, after two days' hard fighting, they were on the railway line between Malines and Termonde. Here, on the 26th, there was a moment of success. The enemy was driven from the village of Audeghem and pressed back on Alost, while at Lebbeke next day there was also a German repulse. The day after the Germans regained most of the ground they had lost; but their left seems to have given up the idea of forcing an immediate crossing of the Scheldt, owing to the strength of the forces which the Belgians had massed on the northern bank. Meanwhile the main attack was beginning to develop against the first line of the Antwerp defences. Malines—what was left of it—had been subjected to a new cannonade on Sunday the 27th, and on the Monday the great siege howitzers were so far advanced to the north that they were within range of the southern forts, and the bombardment of Antwerp began. The Belgians had done the right thing, but they had been too weak to achieve success. They had been fighting without intermission for nearly two months, and the Germans were fresh troops. But the decisive factor was the enormous German preponderance in artillery. The defence in prepared positions may repel an attack six times as numerous, but it cannot stand against six times its weight in guns.

The fortifications of Antwerp demand a brief exposition. In the days of Spanish rule Alva had demolished the old walls of the city, and refortified it with a citadel and a bastioned rampart. These were the works which Carnot held against the Allies in the last days of Napoleon's empire, and which Chassé later defended against Gérard. When Belgium won her freedom it was realized that the city must have space to grow in, and after much debate the reconstruction of the fortress was entrusted to Brialmont. His plans, completed in 1859, provided, as we have already seen,

for a wholesale reorganization of the Belgian defensive system. Belgium's chief danger was believed to lie in the ambitions of Napoleon III., and Brialmont's idea was to make of Antwerp an entrenched camp, into which in the last resort the army could retire to await succour from Britain. That is why the main citadel of Belgium was erected at a point within easy reach of reinforcements from the sea. Brialmont's works were begun in 1861, and completed ten years later. The old ramparts were levelled and replaced by a line of boulevards, around which the new quarters of the city grew up. A fresh line of ramparts, with huge bastions and a ditch like a canal, was erected more than a mile in front of the line of the boulevards, with, as a further defence, a circle of outlying forts two miles in advance of these ramparts. Taking into account the range of siege artillery at that time, it was believed that such a line of forts would be an absolute protection to the city and the harbour. On the northern and western fronts, and on parts of the eastern and southern fronts, large inundations could be made to add to the strength of the defence. The new entrenched camp had a circuit of twenty-seven miles, and formed the most extensive fortress in Europe. It was expected that the alliance or the friendly neutrality of Holland would permit supplies to enter from the Scheldt, so that complete investment would be impossible. To meet the objection that it would take more than a fortnight to put the place on a war footing, Brialmont added to his plan two strong forts on the Nethe, to delay the approach of an invader from the south-west.

But the issue of the war of 1870 upset all these calculations. Strassburg and Metz passed to Germany, leaving the eastern frontier of France open, and in 1874 was begun the construction of the French barrier forts from Verdun to Belfort. Presently it was apparent that these new fortresses might be a serious danger to Belgium. France was no longer a probable assailant, but the Verdun-Belfort line meant that the natural route of a German invasion of France was closed, and that Germany in the event of war might be disposed to turn the barrier by a movement through the Belgian plain. The result was the strengthening of Liège and Namur, and a complete overhauling of the Antwerp defences. Much had happened since 1861, and the time had come to replace the earthworks and stone casements with concrete and steel. Again, Antwerp had prospered beyond the dreams of 1861; new suburbs were demanded, and Brialmont's ramparts were cramping the growing city, while the citadel prevented the construction of new

docks. Besides, the greater range of modern artillery made the place no longer safe from distant bombardment. On all these grounds it was proposed to demolish Brialmont's inner works, and construct a new rampart along the line of the outer forts, which would still serve as bastions. Further, to protect the city from long-range guns, a new circle of outlying forts was to be built some ten miles out in the open country. The southern forts would be beyond the line of the Rupel and the Nethe, close to Malines, the northern would be within gunshot of the Dutch frontier, and the whole circle would be not less than sixty miles. Brialmont opposed the scheme, on the ground that the defence of so great an *enceinte* would require not a garrison but an army. He was overruled, and the work was begun. The outlying forts, constructed on the same plan as those of Liége, were only completed on the eve of war, and it is doubtful whether the eastern and northern sections were ever fully armed. In one respect the great entrenched camp of Antwerp was very strong, for its extent and its contiguity to the sea and the Dutch frontier made investment practically impossible. It fulfilled its purpose, too, of serving as a rallying-ground for the Belgian forces, where they could shelter themselves for a time and wait on the coming of their allies. But so far as bombardment went, its strength was no more than the strength of any group of its advanced forts; and what that was Liége and Namur had given a melancholy demonstration.

That the Belgian army should make a stand in Antwerp was inevitable. The great city was the last important piece of Belgian soil left under the administration of King Albert's Government. It represented Belgium's sovereignty, and if it fell the nation would be homeless. Germany's reason for the attack was no less obvious. The possession of Antwerp would give her no outstanding strategic advantage. It did not command any main line of communication, and the neutralization of the Scheldt—unless she chose to quarrel with Holland—prevented its use as a naval base against Britain. But, since she had projected a sweep to the Channel ports, it was essential that to begin with she should clear her flanks. There were other motives. Germany, strange as it may seem, still cherished the idea of conciliating Belgian sentiment—a proof of her complete incapacity to gauge the temper of peoples other than her own. She argued that, so long as Antwerp remained as a focus of resistance, Belgium would continue intractable, but that with its fall she would realize facts, and accept—grudgingly, perhaps, at first, but with growing alacrity—the part which Germany had



destined for her. About this time the German papers were filled with curious cartoons, in which female figures representing Hamburg and Bremen had their arms about the neck of Antwerp, their weeping sister, with the consoling words on their lips, "Soon you shall be happy as we are, when you have won a German mind." Accordingly, efforts were still made to convince Belgium of her errors. A certain elderly publicist of Brussels was employed to make a proposal to King Albert. If the Belgian army would promise to keep quiet, wrote von der Goltz, to stay within its defences, and do nothing to molest the German occupation of the rest of the country, Antwerp should not be attacked. The emissary returned to Brussels with a very short answer. Some days later Beseler sent an airplane over Antwerp to drop proclamations addressed to the Belgian soldiers. "You have fought long enough," ran this curious document, "in the interests of the Russian princes and the capitalists of perfidious Albion. Your situation is desperate. . . . If you wish to rejoin your wives and children, if you long to return to your work, stop this useless strife, which is only working your ruin. Then you will soon enjoy the blessings of a happy and perfect peace." It seems strange that those responsible for Louvain and Aerschot should have believed in the efficacy of such a lure; but Germany had not yet begun, even dimly, to realize how her code of military ethics was viewed by normal human beings. A second reason was also political. The capture of Antwerp, one of the chief ports in the world, would be an acceptable present to the German nation, which was beginning to be in want of such encouragement. Hindenburg had failed on the Niemen, the Russians were drawing near to Cracow, and the Aisne had proved a costly refuge. The high hopes of the Week of Sedan had declined, and it looked as if the speedy realization of German dreams were out of the question. A solid gain, such as the taking of a great city, would give an enormous stimulus to civilian Germany. Generally speaking, a political purpose must subserve strategical aims; still, if it can be achieved without loss to the main strategy, it is mere pedantry to disregard it.

At the time the world believed that Antwerp was virtually isolated, that four or five miles inland from Ostend the Germans controlled all the country east of the Scheldt. The truth, however, known at the moment only to the more careful students of war, was that they held no part of that district. Bruges was unoccupied; Ghent was not held; the main line from Antwerp to Ostend by St. Nicholas, Ghent, and Bruges was open, as were the smaller

parallel lines running from St. Nicholas westward along the Dutch frontier. Further, there were half a dozen good roads available for traffic. That is to say, there was not only an outlet left for the Belgian army to emerge, but an inlet for Allied reinforcements to enter. Moreover, the Belgians did not hold, and could not have held, this district in any strength. Why did Beseler neglect this open flank? Why, before attacking Antwerp, did he not isolate it, for only thus could he reap the full fruits of his victory? He made, indeed, some attempts to cross the Scheldt, but never in force till it was too late. Yet if he had advanced to St. Nicholas before 1st October not a British sailor would have entered the city, and if he had reached it before 9th October not many fighting men would have left it.\* The explanation is that, with little more than an army corps at his disposal, he had not the men. The assault on Antwerp relied upon the siege guns; if they failed, Beseler must wait for the new corps now marching from Germany to the Duke of Würtemberg. It was the advent of these that was the essential point in Falkenhayn's plan. If the IV. Army could turn the extended Allied left and drive on to the coast at Calais, the Belgian garrison of Antwerp and any reinforcements the Allies might have sent would be cut off in Northern Flanders without shelter or base, and could be dealt with at leisure.

On Monday, 28th September, the curtain rose on the first act of the tragedy of Antwerp. The German howitzers were in position against the forts south of the river Nethe, and the first attack was directed upon Waelhem and Wavre St. Catherine. All day on the 28th the pounding of Waelhem and Wavre went on, and there was a good deal of infantry fighting all along the line from Termonde to Lierre. The Belgians south of the Nethe, assisted by their field batteries on the northern bank, met the German attack, and counter-attacked with some success. But for the big howitzers, the day went well for Belgium. Yet those who saw the effect of the shells on the two forts realized that the end could not long be delayed. The bombardment went on during the night, and early on the morning of Tuesday, the 29th, Fort Wavre was silenced. Its cupolas and concrete works were smashed beyond repair, and the blowing up of the magazine made the work untenable. Its commander insisted on returning with a fresh garrison, but found that every gun was out of action. Waelhem also had one of its cupolas smashed, but managed to continue

\* For a partial explanation, see the official monograph, *Schlachten des Weltkrieges Antwerpen 1914*.

its resistance during the day. Next day it and Fort Lierre were the centre of German attentions. An unfortunate accident which happened during the morning had important results for the defence. Behind Waelhem lay the main waterworks of Antwerp, and shell after shell was dropped by the Germans on the embankment of the great reservoir. At last the dyke gave way, and the water poured into the infantry trenches which had been dug between the forts. These were presently flooded out, the field guns were submerged, and it became impossible to carry supplies to Waelhem. The Belgian device of inundation was turned against them. A more serious result was the shrinkage caused in the city's water supply. It did not fail, for there were artesian wells, but water had now to be carried long distances in pails and buckets, the health of the citizens was imperilled, and it was certain that any conflagration caused by the bombardment must burn unchecked.

Thursday, 1st October, saw the fall of the southern forts. Wavre was destroyed, Waelhem had only one gun, Fort Koningshoeyck, south of Lierre, was silenced, and Fort Lierre soon followed; while the village of Lierre was set on fire, and advertised by its smoke, which was seen clearly from Antwerp, what was happening south of the Nethe. Farther west German infantry attacks had cleared out Termonde, and forced the Belgians across the Scheldt by a wooden bridge, which they afterwards destroyed. On that day, and during the night which followed, the Belgian forces relinquished the ruined fortresses and fell back to the northern bank of the Nethe, to a line of entrenchments which they had already prepared. Fort Wavre and its fellows had held out for four days—a fine achievement if we realize the circumstances. It was longer than any of the Liège forts had resisted after the big guns had once been brought against them, and four times as long as Namur. The stand of the southern defences of Antwerp represented probably the maximum achievement of a Brialmont fort against modern artillery.

The fight for Antwerp had now ceased to be a siege, and become something in the nature of a field battle. The Nethe lines gave a strong position, but to hold them required a large force and an artillery equipment not inferior to that of the enemy. In Antwerp itself a gallant effort was made to keep up the spirit of the citizens. The newspapers published reassuring statements, and any whisper of the true state of affairs across the Nethe was rigorously excluded. All day long the faint thunder of the guns was heard in the streets; by night numbers of wounded and dead were brought in in the darkness; the hotels and cafés were



filled with staff officers and correspondents, and airplanes circled daily above the city. But for some reason the hopes of the inhabitants were high. They had a fixed idea that their great forts would hold off the enemy, and that at any hour the British might arrive, to turn the defence into an advance. By Saturday, the 3rd, however, melancholy had begun to descend upon the crowds in the streets and boulevards. Something of the views of those in authority had filtered through to the ordinary citizen. For on the Friday afternoon it had been decided that the Government should leave for Ostend. One boat was to sail on the Saturday morning with the Belgian authorities and the foreign Legations, and another in the afternoon with the members of the French and British colonies. A proclamation was issued by the burgomaster, M. de Vos, allowing those who wished to leave the city, and General de Guise, the military governor, issued another, calling upon the citizens to show courage and coolness in all contingencies. These two proclamations had an immediate effect upon the popular mind. Many of the ordinary inhabitants, especially the well-to-do, began to leave for Holland and England. The second boat, arranged for the Saturday afternoon, sailed with the principal members of the French and British colonies. But the first boat, which was to carry the Government and the Legations, did not leave, for on the Saturday came a sudden change in the situation. Belgium had made a last despairing appeal to Britain for help, and news had arrived that this help was on the way.

The condition of Antwerp had, since 2nd October, given Lord Kitchener acute anxiety. He saw the malign consequences involved in its fall, and was resolved to make every effort to prevent it. He had already a brigade of marines at Ostend, and he induced the Cabinet, still very nervous about invasion, to allow him to send the 7th Infantry Division, under Sir Henry Rawlinson, and the 3rd Cavalry Division, under Sir Julian Byng, to Belgium as a relief force. Sir John French was at the time moving his army from the Aisne, and was too far away and too much engaged to take charge of the new operations; for this reason, and also to quiet the nervousness of the Cabinet, Kitchener kept the relief forces under his own command. Joffre was sending a brigade of marines and a Territorial division for the same purpose. But these reinforcements could not reach the Belgian coast before the 6th or 7th, and already the condition of Antwerp was desperate. He agreed to send at once the only troops immediately available, the half-trained Royal Naval Division.



On Sunday, 4th October, about one o'clock, Mr. Winston Churchill, the British First Lord of the Admiralty, arrived in Antwerp, and stayed for three days. He visited the firing lines, exposing himself with his usual courage, and he managed to convince the authorities that there was still a reasonable chance of victory. Late on the Sunday night the first instalment of the British reinforcements arrived by train from Ostend in the shape of the brigade of Royal Marines, 2,000 strong, with several naval guns. They at once marched out to the front, and took up a position on the Nethe to the left of the Belgians. Next day came the remainder of the reinforcements, two naval brigades, totalling 6,000 men—the whole British force being commanded by General Paris of the Royal Marines, who was himself under the direction of General de Guise. The two naval brigades, the cadres of which were drawn from the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Fleet Reserve, and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, had been constituted in the third week of August, and were still busily recruiting at the beginning of October. Most of the officers and men had no previous military experience, and some of those recently joined had come straight from civil life, and had not yet handled a rifle. Their equipment was imperfect: many had no pouches to carry their ammunition, or water-bottles, or overcoats; while some were compelled to stick their bayonets in their putties, or tie them to their belts with string. The four battalions of Marines were, of course, regulars, representing the full efficiency of their splendid service. Each naval brigade was organized in four battalions named after famous admirals. The 1st Brigade was made up of the "Drake," "Benbow," "Hawke," and "Collingwood" battalions; the 2nd of the "Nelson," "Howe," "Hood," and "Anson." The arrival of the British had an electrical effect on the spirits of the Belgians, both soldiers and civilians. The spruce, well-set-up lads looked business-like and fit, and only trained observers could see that the majority of them were novices at soldiering. Cheering crowds followed them in the streets, and the sorely tried Belgian soldiery marched out to their trenches with songs on their lips and a new light in their eyes. It was not only for themselves that our men were welcomed, but as an earnest of what might follow. The Belgians could not believe that Britain would put her hand to the business unless she meant to see it through. The military authorities thought that the better part of an army corps was on its way, and that the six naval guns were only the beginning of a great influx of artillery, sufficient to equalize their strength

in this arm with that of the enemy. The London motor omnibuses with their homely legends, lumbering through the Antwerp streets with the ammunition and supplies of the Naval Division, seemed a proof that their Allies had come at last. Another ground of confidence was the British armoured train, which had been built in an engineering yard at Hoboken, and which mounted four 4.7 naval guns. Whatever may have been the actual achievement of this train, it served wonderfully to raise Belgian spirits. The other four 6.5 guns were mounted close to Forts 3 and 4 in the inner circle of the defences.

We have seen that from Friday, 2nd October, the fight for Antwerp had become more in the nature of a field battle, the Belgians holding a line of trenches just north of the Nethe. They were not good trenches, their head-cover was bad, and certainly they were not prepared to resist the storm of shrapnel which the Germans directed against them. Something between 300 and 400 field guns were brought into the attack. The villages in the Belgian rear, especially Waerloos and Linth, were destroyed by the German fire, and the inhabitants of all the district north of the Nethe began to flock towards Antwerp. On the Saturday, 3rd October, the Germans attempted to cross the river at Waelhem. Several pontoon bridges were built, but in each case they were blown to pieces before they could be used, and here probably the invaders incurred their heaviest losses. On the Sunday a crossing was attempted between Duffel and Lierre, and was vigorously resisted by the British Marines, who were stationed in this section. But the numbers, both of men and artillery, were too great to be long denied, and on the afternoon of Monday, the 5th, the left wing of the defence fell back from its trenches on the river bank to a second line some hundreds of yards to the north. On the Monday night there was a great German attack, covered by powerful artillery, on the Belgian centre. The defenders managed to prevent the building of pontoons, but in the night several thousand Germans swam or waded the river, and established themselves on the northern shore. Early on the morning of Tuesday, the 6th, the passage of the Nethe had been won, and there was nothing for it but to fall back upon the inner circle of forts, whose armament was obsolete, and as little fitted to face the German howitzers as a liner to meet the shock of a battleship.

That day, the 6th, revealed to every one the desperate case of Antwerp. She had, indeed, been at the mercy of the big howitzers from the moment they were brought up close to the Nethe. But

the Germans did not choose to use these for the bombardment, contenting themselves with bringing their field guns and their lesser siege pieces against the inner forts. The country between the Nethe and the inner circle became uninhabitable. In that land of closely tilled fields and windmills and poplars, in the pleasant autumn weather when the labourers should have been busy with getting in the root crops and preparing the soil for the spring sowing, there was only desolation and destruction. Many villages had been levelled by the Belgian army, and some, set on fire by the enemy's shells, smouldered in the windless air, instead of the common October bonfires of garden refuse; while the inhabitants with their scanty belongings poured along the guarded highways to Antwerp or to Holland. In the city the truth was faced at last. The British troops could not delay the inevitable, and there was no hope of further reinforcements. In the evening the Belgian Government and the Legations of the Allies went on board the two steamers which had been kept in readiness, and early on the 7th sailed down the Scheldt for the coast of France. That evening, too, the machinery of the German ships lying in Antwerp docks was rendered useless by dynamite explosions. During the night the citizens had another proof of Antwerp's impending doom. On the western side of the Scheldt, beyond the bridge of boats which led to the railway terminus at Waes, stood the great oil tanks which formed one of the chief depots in north-western Europe. These tanks were tapped by order of the authorities; but, since the oil ran off too slowly, they were set on fire. When the people of Antwerp woke on the morning of the 7th they smelt the rank odour of burning petroleum, and saw drifting above the city a dense black cloud which obscured the sunlight.

Wednesday, the 7th, brought the official announcement that all was over. Proclamations, signed by General de Guise, were posted throughout the city declaring that a bombardment was imminent, while the burgomaster advised all who wished to leave to lose no time, and recommended those who meant to stay to take shelter in their cellars. The newspapers announced that the enemy was already attacking the inner forts, and that a service of steamers had been provided for refugees, and would begin at midday. The more dangerous wild beasts in the Zoological Gardens, many of them treasured gifts from the Congo State, were shot by their keepers. The day before Beseler had sent a message to de Guise, warning him of the intended bombardment, and the Belgian governor had answered that he accepted responsibility for



the consequences. That day there came another message from the German lines, asking for a plan of Antwerp with the hospitals, public buildings, and museums clearly marked, that, as far as possible, they might be spared. Such a plan was carried to Beseler by an official from the American Consulate; but the inhabitants, suspicious of the honour of the enemy, gave all such places a wide berth, and regarded them as likely to be the first objects of the German attack. Meanwhile the nerve of the townspeople had at last broken. Up till now they had kept their spirits high, but the official proclamation, the sound of the great guns ever drawing nearer, the black pall of smoke, the blaze at night of the shell-fire to the south, and above all the sight of their own soldiers marching westward over the bridge of boats towards Waes, convinced them that the doom of the city was sealed. Small blame to them that, with Louvain and Aerschot in their memories, they expected a carnival of unimaginable horrors. Antwerp, on the morning of the 7th, contained little short of half a million people, for the inhabitants of the neighbouring districts had flocked to it for refuge. By the evening a quarter of a million had gone; by the next night the place was as solitary as a desert. Half at least went by water. The quaysides were packed with frantic crowds, carrying household goods on their backs and in their hands, and struggling for places on any kind of raft that could keep afloat. Tramps, ferries, dredgers, trawlers, pleasure yachts, steam launches, fishing boats, and even rafts were put in use. There was desperate confusion, for there were no police; and vessels, sunk almost to the water-line with a weight of humanity, lay for hours in the stream, till the actual bombardment began, and the incendiary bombs made lurid patches below the dark canopy of smoke from the oil tanks. One observer reported that as each shell burst there came a great sigh of terror from the vessels lingering in the dark waters.

The exodus was even more terrible by land. Many crossed the Scheldt by the bridge of boats and the ferries, and fled to Ghent; but most took the road where the tramways ran to the Dutch frontier and Bergen-op-Zoom. This little town, which has only 16,000 inhabitants in normal times, received in these days at least 200,000 exiles; and it says much for the patient kindness of the Dutch people that somehow or other food and shelter were forthcoming. Most of the refugees had been too hurried to provide themselves with provisions, and many fell weary and famished by the wayside. Infants were prematurely born, and the sick and the old died from exposure. Women who had been delicately nurtured



ate raw turnips and potatoes from the fields. Every kind of conveyance from motor cars to wheelbarrows was utilized, and many an Æneas carried Anchises on his shoulders. On the Ghent road women in fur coats and high-heeled shoes clung to the ends of wagons; white-haired men grasped the harness of the gun teams, or the stirrup-leathers of the troops; pale nuns shepherded flocks of weeping children. It was worse on the road to Bergen, by which the poorest and the weakest fled. There the highway and the fields for miles on either side were black with the panting crowds, stumbling over the forms of those who had fallen from exhaustion. And ever behind them roared the great guns, and the horrible fleur-de-lis of pitchy smoke seemed to form a barrier between the tortured earth and the merciful heavens.

Such was the "passion" of Antwerp. Let us return to the final stage of the conflict north of the Nethe. Early on Tuesday, the 6th, the Germans had won the crossings of the river, and the defenders had fallen back on the inner forts. On that day the withdrawal of the Belgian army began, and several divisions, chiefly cavalry and cyclists, were hurried through Antwerp across the Scheldt towards the Ghent railway. Their duty was to hold the western road and block any flank attack. All day the Germans were busy bringing their guns over the river, and by the evening the inner forts were subjected to a heavy bombardment. The great howitzers were not brought north of the Nethe, and the Germans confined their activity to common shell, shrapnel, and incendiary bombs. On the 7th there was desperate fighting on the Scheldt, for Beseler seems to have at last resolved to do something to cut off the retreat of the garrison. German troops crossed that river at Termonde, as well as at Schoonaerde and Wetteren, and began a movement towards the railway line at Lokeren. Now was proved the usefulness of the advance guard of the Belgians which had been sent west on the night of the 6th. They made a gallant stand at Zele, and prevented for nearly two days the German approach to the railway.

The official bombardment began at midnight on the 7th, and the suburb of Berchem was set on fire. During Thursday, the 8th, there was fierce fighting along the inner ring of forts, while the Belgian and British troops were being withdrawn across the Scheldt. General Paris asked that his Naval Division should act as rear-guard, but General de Guise reserved the privilege for his own men. All through the day the inner forts were assailed, and by the evening Forts 3 and 4 had fallen. By this time the defence

was at an end. Nearly all the garrison had fallen back, and much of it was over the Scheldt. The Naval Division had stuck to the end to the forts and the trenches between, and for new troops had acquitted themselves most gallantly, considering the badness of the commissariat arrangements and the weakness of their artillery supports. Unfortunately the staff work proved faulty, as it well might in such a confusion. The 2nd Naval Brigade was on the west of the Malines road, and the 1st Brigade was on the east, around Forts 1-4. The order to retire did not reach the "Hawke," "Benbow," and "Collingwood" battalions of the latter brigade, and the result was that they were almost the last to leave the now useless defences. By the morning of Friday, the 9th, practically the whole of the garrison was across the Scheldt. The three laggard battalions of the Naval Division arrived to find that the bridge of boats had been destroyed, but they managed to cross on rafts and barges, and found a train at Waes. Then their difficulties began. One party got as far as Lokeren, where they heard that the Germans had cut the railway ahead; probably a false report, for the Germans do not seem to have reached that part of the line till the evening. Accordingly they marched north to the Dutch frontier. A second party got as far as Niewerken, the station east of St. Nicholas, where they found the Germans in possession, and were forced to surrender. Some went down the Scheldt in boats, and landed in Dutch territory, out of ignorance of the law as to internment. About 18,000 of the Belgian troops were also driven into Holland, and some, mainly those who fought at Zele, were made prisoners by the Germans. The British losses were 37 killed, 193 wounded, nearly 1,000 missing, of whom over 800 became prisoners of war, and 1,560 interned in Holland. Of the 1st Naval Brigade which had arrived at Antwerp 3,000 strong, less than 1,000 returned to England.

The expedition to Antwerp occasioned at the time much heart-searching in Britain and among our troops in France. It was a side-show, and side-shows are condemned by sound strategy. Cynics found comfort in the fact that we had never won success in continental war without a disastrous adventure in the Low Countries organized by politicians. But to see in the Antwerp affair a second Walcheren Expedition does less than justice to the sanity of the scheme. It was no escapade of a single Minister, but part of a larger strategical plan which had the approval of the Secretary of State for War. Lord Kitchener's scheme was for a considerable relief force, which should not only relieve Antwerp but



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join with the main British army in operating against the enemy's right flank. But Rawlinson's 7th Division and Byng's cavalry did not arrive at Zeebrugge and Ostend till the 6th and 7th, after a most difficult passage, and by that time Antwerp was doomed. There was nothing to do but to retire to meet the main British forces coming north from the Aisne, for by the 8th it was clear that the German right was in far greater strength than had been at first imagined. Sir John French has criticized the whole operation; but as an emergency measure it was justified, since it was plain that any relief work from his end was impossible. It is true that it condemned Byng and Rawlinson to a difficult retreat, but to urge that they should have been sent straightway to French's command is to deny the reasonableness of any attempt at Antwerp's relief. They failed in their purpose because events at Antwerp marched faster than Kitchener expected. The value of the dispatch of the Naval Division is more disputable. The British brigades undoubtedly, by delaying the fall of the city for a few days, enabled much useful destructive work to be done in the city and among the ships in the harbour. They did not cover the retreat of the Belgian army, for it is clear that the Belgians covered the retreat of the Naval Division; and it is not improbable that this duty increased the total of Belgian losses. Had the garrison retired on the 4th or 5th it would have got clear away. It must be written down as a failure, but that failure was due to the fact that it was an isolated enterprise, and by ill fortune could not be combined with the larger operation which was Kitchener's purpose.

The bombardment, which began at midnight on the 7th, lasted throughout the 8th. Antwerp was like a city of the dead. Only the hospitals remained, working hard to get off their patients, and a few Belgian soldiers left behind on special duty. Shells whistled overhead, and now and then the gable of a building would fall into the street; but it did little harm, for there was no one near to be hurt. Night, when it came, presented an appalling spectacle, as in old pictures of the fall of Troy. Fires had broken out in various districts, and burned luridly in the still air. A number of flaming lighters lit up the Scheldt, till the waters flowed blood-red like some river of Hades. Overhead was the black mushroom of petroleum smoke, which seemed to brood over the rooftops, and only on the far horizon was there a belt of clear star-sown sky. There were no lamps in the city, so that acres of abysmal darkness were varied with patches of glaring shell-light. But all

the time the desperate cannonade went on, and sometimes an incendiary bomb would make a rosy cavern in the heart of the dark cloud.

Early on the 9th the bombardment ceased. The inner forts had fallen, and the gates of the city lay open. About one o'clock German motor cars entered by the Porte de Malines, and an officer informed the burgomaster that Antwerp was now a German city. When Admiral von Schroeder made his stately entrance down the broad boulevards to the Hôtel de Ville a very different sight met his eye from that which had greeted Armin's forces when they entered Brussels. There were no spectators to admire the Prussian parade step or be impressed by the precision of the part songs. It might have been an avenue of sepulchres instead of one of the gayest cities of Europe. No flag was flown, no inquisitive face looked out of the blind windows. As some one caustically observed, it was like a circus that had come to town before it was expected.

The world had never before seen such a migration of a people or such an emptying of a great city. It recalled the time when a king of Babylon carried Israel captive to eat the bread of sorrow by foreign streams, or those doings of ancient conquerors when they moved the inhabitants of a conquered town to some new site, and razed and sowed with salt the old foundations. But those were affairs of little places and small numbers, and this involved half a million souls and one of the proudest cities of Europe. Fighting has its own decencies, and when it is done on conventional lines of attack and counter-attack by normal armies, our habituation prevents us from realizing the colossal unreason of it all. But suddenly comes some such business as Antwerp and unseals our eyes. We see the laborious handiwork of man, the cloak which he has made to shelter himself from the outer winds, shrivel before a folly of his own devising. All the sacrifice and heroism, which are the poor recompenses of war, are suddenly overshadowed, and etched in with bitter clearness we note its horror and futility. Some day the world, when its imagination has grown quicker, will find the essence of war not in gallant charges and heroic stands, but in those pale women dragging their pitiful belongings through the Belgian fields in the raw October night. When that day comes the tumult and the shouting will die, and the kings and captains depart on nobler errands.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF WAR.

The Position of Parties in Britain—A Nation United but not yet Awake—The Situation in France—False Views about Russia—Germany—Turkey—Italy—The Smaller Peoples—The United States.

EVEN in a history of war concerned mainly with the operations of fleets and armies, it is imperative to pause now and then and glance at civil events. The most notable are those which shed light upon the domestic conditions and the spirit of the belligerent peoples, and upon the feeling of the neutral states. The political situation is especially interesting at the beginning and the end of a campaign. Half-way the position is apt to ossify. Belligerents settle down to a sullen resolution, and neutrals to a sombre acquiescence. But in the first months we are witnessing the creation of national attitudes, and much wavering and disquiet before the realization of the facts is complete.

The first week of war broke to pieces the accepted military policy of Britain. It was not that that policy was inherently wrong; but it was shaped for ninety-nine out of a hundred possible contingencies, and the hundredth had happened. Her Expeditionary Force, adequate for any ordinary crisis, was transparently inadequate for this, and had to be many times multiplied. Her Territorial Force, consecrated to home defence, was soon an army of volunteers for foreign service. It may fairly be said that the British people set themselves with commendable sang-froid to revise their theories and improvise levies on the continental scale. They were both assisted and hampered by the fact that the ordinary life of the country was not seriously dislocated. They had no invaders within their borders, nor much likelihood of invasion. After the first hectic days they found that their commerce and industries were not greatly affected. The financial crisis was manfully faced, and the Government, in consultation with the chiefs of the city of London, devised a series of measures,

some of which, indeed, were open to criticism, but which on the whole served the purpose of restoring confidence and safeguarding national credit. Expedients like the moratorium and the new note issues were obvious enough, but it required courage to guarantee outstanding bills of exchange to the amount of £400,000,000, and to devise the various means of preventing the Stock Exchange from disappearing in wholesale bankruptcy. Except among a very limited class, there was far less unemployment than in the beginning of an ordinary autumn. Some industries were crippled, but others were enormously benefited by war. In a few weeks a sense of security stole over the land, and when later the Government announced a vast scheme of new taxation and the raising of a war loan of £350,000,000—by far the largest state loan in the world's history—the people of Britain assented without a murmur.

She possessed one signal advantage as compared with her past struggles. Her leaders, at any rate, recognized that they were face to face with war on the grand scale. Policy was in harmony with strategy; there was not likely to be any interference with the armies on political grounds—none of the maddening and inept dictation from home which was the bane of Wellington in the Peninsula. Both the great political parties were determined on a “fight to a finish,” and willing to trust the experts. No praise can be too high for the conduct of the official Opposition, and for those smaller sections which were not wholly in sympathy with the party in power. The Government had not to face the kind of attack which Pitt suffered at the hands of Fox and his allies, and which in a lesser degree appeared during the South African War. An opposition quickly formed, but it was small in numbers and intellectually inconsiderable. It contained the men who, whether from generosity or from perversity of spirit, must always side with the minority. It was sufficient for such that Germany should be widely unpopular; instantly they discovered merits in the German case. Their motive, as has been well said, was that “peculiar form of pugnacity which is often miscalled ‘love of justice’—a habit of irritation at excess which finds vent not in justice but in counter-excess.” \* Others were so rooted in a stubborn British confidence that they could not envisage any danger to their liberties, and, distrusting after the British fashion all politicians, convinced themselves that their country's interests were being sacrificed to some shoddy political game. Some out

\* Gilbert Murray: *Faith, War, and Policy*, p. 53.



of a gross spiritual pride conceived that the ethical principle which brought the nation into war must needs be wrong, since it was so generally accepted. There were the few genuine pacifists to whom war on any ground was abhorrent; there were various egotistical practitioners of minor arts and exponents of minor causes who resented anything which distracted attention from themselves and their works. But whether the cause was moral arrogance, or temperamental obstinacy, or vanity, or mere mental confusion, the anti-war party was negligible. The nation had rarely been so completely united.

But it was not yet completely awake. The Government, after the first shock, anticipated a short campaign and a decisive triumph, in which they showed no desire to allow their political opponents to share. Lord Kitchener's insistence upon a three years' war was considered to be the grandiosity of a specialist who exaggerates his own speciality. They recognized the reality of the challenge which they had to meet, but underrated its magnitude. Mr. Asquith stated with admirable clearness the issues, but seemed to regard the result as predetermined; Mr. Lloyd George lent his impassioned eloquence to rouse his countrymen, but was himself so far from realizing the nature of the struggle that he estimated Britain's daily expenditure at £750,000, which he said would be a diminishing figure. Like leaders like people. The national psychology of Britain during the first months of war provided an interesting contrast with the state of mind of a land like France, where compulsory service and the presence of the invader brought home to every man and woman the terrible gravity of the contest. In Britain there was no lack of patriotic enthusiasm. Large sums were subscribed to the Prince of Wales's Fund and to similar collections; a thousand war charities were started; the sports and pleasures of the rich disappeared; there was an honest desire in all classes to lend a hand. From the press flowed a torrent of pamphlets in which the German character was acidly analyzed, and the badness of the German case compendiously expounded. Letters from angry novelists and furious poets filled the newspapers, and every man who could write became a publicist. Many a noted pacifist, temporarily bellicose, girded on his pen. Much of this gave the impression that the writers wrote to soothe uneasy consciences, and to atone for past perversity by present exuberance. But with all this activity the attitude of the ordinary Briton was curiously academic. He was indignant with Germany, because

of her doings in Belgium, because she seemed to him the author of the war, and because her creed violated all the doctrines in which he had been taught to believe. He was determined to beat her and to draw her fangs. But he had as yet no realization of the horrible actualities of modern battles, or of the solemnity of the crisis for civilization, for his country, and for himself. The ordinary mind is slow to visualize the unknown, and the smoke of a burning homestead, seen or remembered, is a more potent aid to vision than the most graphic efforts of the war correspondent or the orator. A proof of this was the popularity during the early weeks of the phrase, "Business as usual," as a national watchword—a watchword acclaimed by every type of citizen, from advertisement agents to Cabinet Ministers. The phrase, properly applied, was not without good sense, but its application was preposterously wide. Many came to think more of capturing the enemy's trade after the war than of beating him as soon as possible in the field. The catchword showed the comparative remoteness of the bulk of our citizens from any true understanding of the struggle. Early in September the Government, faithful to the same motto, took occasion to pass into law their two chief controversial measures. For such an action there was no doubt, under the circumstances, a certain justification; but that it was possible showed how greatly the situation of Britain differed from that of France, where a national and not a partisan government was in power, and where the gravity of war was intimately present to every mind.

This feeling—as of a crisis serious but not too serious—was obviously bad for recruiting. There were other hindrances. Britain's treatment of aliens looked very like playing with the question. Hordes of humble folk—waiters, barbers, and the like—were interned or put under surveillance, but various wealthy and highly placed foreigners went free, and continued to share the confidence of the authorities. Most of these, no doubt, were naturalized; but the world was already aware of the value of such naturalization. Again, she was not fortunate in her handling of the press. She established a Press Bureau, which proceeded upon principles not easily intelligible. Britain, with her free traditions, made a bad censor, and in official secrecy she went far beyond what was demanded by military requirements. Her people heard little of the great deeds of their army, and regiments were rarely mentioned, so that the chief aid to recruiting was abandoned. Such a censorship was in truth inconsistent

not only with her system of voluntary recruiting, but with her type of democratic government. In time of war a civilian First Lord at the Admiralty and a civilian Home Secretary, dealing with many semi-military questions, involved as their logical corollary a large measure of free public criticism. To withdraw this right by withdrawing reasonable information was to make of her constitution a bureaucracy without a true bureaucracy's efficiency. There were other blunders made in the machinery of enrolment. The magic of Lord Kitchener's name was beyond doubt one of the chief aids to recruiting, but the Secretary for War increased the immense difficulties of his task by refusing to use the existing Territorial organization for his levies and creating a brand-new model.\* A mistake was made, too, with regard to Ireland. The outbreak of war had called a truce between the combatants there, a truce most honourably observed by the respective leaders. Sir Edward Carson and Mr. John Redmond flung themselves into the work of recruiting, and Ireland's well-wishers hoped that the partnership of North and South in the field might bring about that sense of a common nationality without which Home Rule must be a forlorn experiment. For a moment it seemed as if there was a chance of such harmony, but the refusal to attract nationalist sentiment in Ireland by the creation of national units chilled the fervour of these first stages. The chance of the flood tide was not to come again.

Yet in spite of many hindrances the voluntary system did not at once break down. Indeed, it justified itself beyond the hopes of its warmest advocates. Remember what Britain asked of her volunteers. In a continental country, with the enemy at its gates, a man was called upon to enlist for the defence of his home and his livelihood. But that was not her case, nor at the time did it seem likely to be her case. She could only ask for recruits to fight for the honour and interest of Britain and of her Allies. These were great matters, but obviously they must appeal to a more limited class than the call to strike a blow against a direct invasion. The men who enlisted came often from classes to whom the soldier's pay was no attraction, and who had other ways of earning their living. They came either because they comprehended and believed in the principles for which the Allies stood, or because they liked fighting for its own sake. Those who were engaged in the business of recruiting

\* The defence is that the Territorial Associations consisted too largely of civilians (Sir George Arthur's *Life of Lord Kitchener*, III., 308)—a weak argument which was disposed of by Kitchener himself, who in the Derby Scheme and the Military Service Act of 1916 made use of a purely civilian organization.

soon came to realize that a man's readiness to enlist depended mainly upon his understanding of the situation. The areas which did specially well—the mining districts of North England, London, Lancashire, the Scottish Lowlands, Birmingham—were those near the centre of things, or where the people showed a high level of intelligence and education. The Durham miners enlisted in thousands when the news came of the German destruction of Belgian coal-pits; that made them visualize the realities of war. The backward areas were either those remote from news centres, or localities where the mills were busy with the manufacture of war stores. The rural districts were, on the whole, apathetic till after the harvest or the term day; but when the shepherds and labourers were free, they showed no disinclination to serve. By Christmas, 1914, fully 2,000,000 of the inhabitants of the British Isles were under arms, either for home defence or foreign service, and the figures were daily growing. To an impartial observer it must seem that the voluntary system achieved wonders—miracles, if we remember the many needless obstacles placed in its path.

In France the arresting feature was the singular calm of her people. War was inside her threshold, and the usual social life was at a standstill. By the end of August she had lost 93 per cent. of her wool industry, 83 per cent. of her iron industry, 63 per cent. of her steel industry, 92 per cent. of her iron ore mines, 35 per cent. of her sugar industry, and 10 per cent. of her cereal production. Presently the Government left Paris, and the capital waited breathlessly for the sound of the fortress guns which should announce the beginning of the German assault. But in the press, in public speeches, in private letters, in conversation, there was no sign of fear or flurry. She realized the worst, she expected it, but she was confident of the end. For some years past there had been a remarkable revival in the country of what may be called a religious nationalism. The old shallow secularism was losing its grip. At the moment she led the world in philosophy, and the teaching of men like Bergson and Henri Poincaré was in the direction of a rational humility before the mysteries of the spirit. Just as there was a striking religious movement in the armies of Lee before the great conflict in the Wilderness, so in France before the outbreak of war there had been a very clear reaction against the former materialism. In her public life she had suffered in late years especially from two dangers: a doctrinaire international socialism, and—far more insidious—a conscienceless international finance. When the



hour of crisis came the exponents of the first rallied, as we have seen, most nobly to the national cause. The second disappeared from the surface, though its evil effects were long to be felt in the corruption which had weakened the army in many branches of war material.

The spirit of France can best be described in the words of Maurice Barrès as a "grave enthusiasm, a disciplined exaltation." It was the temper which wins battles, for it was unbreakable. Once more she felt herself leading the van of Europe, and the alliance of Britain, her secular enemy, filled her with a generous delight. On the great memorial crucifix on the field of Agincourt French soldiers, encamped near by, wrote: "Hommage à nos braves alliés." Old critics of England, like M. Hanotaux and M. Rostand, recanted their suspicions, and testified to the spiritual unity, which wars had never wholly broken, between those whose history was so closely knit. France awoke to a consciousness of her past. In all this there was no violent reversal of things, no leaning to a sectional aim, nothing of Boulangism, or Royalism, or Clericalism. She became catholic in the broadest sense, zealous to maintain her republican freedom and her post in the forefront of intellectual liberty, but not less zealous for that delicate spiritual heritage which is independent of change in creeds and churches.

The bane of her wars in the past had been the domination of the soldier by the politician. But at the end of August politicians of all shades subordinated themselves to the soldiers. There were no appointments made because this or that minister wished to do a kindness to a friend, and no moves were undertaken because Paris had views. The discretion and self-effacement of M. Viviani and his colleagues were as remarkable as their resolution. A standard of naked efficiency ruled at General Joffre's headquarters. Eminent generals were ruthlessly dismissed when they failed; younger men were promoted with bewildering speed when their competence was proved. The personality of the Commander-in-Chief was beyond doubt one of the chief assets of his country at the moment. That square, homely figure, scant of words, loathing advertisement, plainly, almost untidily dressed, and looking not unlike a North Sea pilot, was far enough removed from the traditional French general who, in brilliant uniform, curvets on a white charger, and pronounces eulogies of "la gloire." He was another portent of the new France.

The position of Russia seemed at the moment almost the most hopeful of all the Allies. For the first time since 1812 it looked as

if she had a national war and a national ideal which could permeate and vitalize the whole of her gigantic body politic. In Manchuria she had been fighting half-heartedly for a cause which she neither liked nor understood, and thereafter had come that welter of disorder, that ill-led scramble for liberties, which often follows an unsuccessful and unpopular campaign. The forces of order won as against the forces of emancipation, for the liberationists were not ready, and in a strife of dreams and policy, policy will usually be victor. But the forces of order learned much in the contest, and under men like Stolypin began a slow movement towards, not the westernizing of Russia, but the realization of her own native ideals. When the campaign opened, there appeared to be an amazing rally of those very elements in her society which had hitherto seemed intent upon a doctrinaire cosmopolitanism. The "intelligents" were not less enthusiastic than the mujiks, and the student class, formerly the nursery of revolutions, was foremost in offering its services, and accepted joyfully the repeal of the laws which gave it freedom from conscription. Russia, it was assumed, had one special advantage in such a war. In the Tsardom she had a natural centre of leadership, an office with mystic sanctions which no other modern kingship could display. The humblest peasant from the backwoods fought for a monarch whom he had never seen as the soldiers of the French Guard fought for Napoleon. In the Allied lines in the West there was a strange mixture of nationalities and races, but it was nothing to that battle front in the East. There, indeed, you had a bewildering array of figures: Finn and Tartar, Caucasian and Mongol, Buriat and Samoyede and Kirghiz and Turcoman, fighting side by side with the normal types of European Russia. To weld such a miscellany into a fighting force more was needed than skilful organization, more even than a great national cause; it required the spell of a kingship, mystic and paternal and half divine. It seemed as if the Tsardom were such a kingship. To Western observers it appeared that Russia had undergone a great regeneration, and that the scandals of the Russo-Japanese War were now for ever impossible. A further proof was found in the renunciation by her Government of the alcohol monopoly, which meant a loss of many millions of revenue. Only a great and simple people, it was argued, could take such heroic measures and loyally obey them.

This belief in the strength and efficiency of Russian power was buttressed by an altogether different confidence in her spiritual quality. Many Western observers had long looked towards her

for an influence which should counteract the weakness of our modern commercial civilization. Russia, with all her faults, was perhaps the purest democracy in the world. She had not felt the blighting effects of a mechanical culture, and had retained a certain primitive simplicity and spirituality. At her best, in her literature and her thought, she represented the new spirit which we have seen to be appearing in France. She still dwelt in the ages of faith. Her mystic communism had no affinities with the shallow materialism and the capitalistic tyranny which had been the working creed of western Europe and the United States. Her great writers, like Dostoevski and Tolstoi, had flown the flag of an unshaken idealism. Of the fighting valour of the Russian there was never any doubt, for the spirit of the men who fought at Borodino still lived in their descendants. But joined to their courage was a curious gentleness, the gentleness of that iron dreamer, that practical mystic, whom Lord Rosebery has called the most formidable of all combinations. The race which Prussia condemned as barbarians had a culture beyond that of their critics. In them there seemed to be a wide humanity, a pity for the oppressed, a mercifulness and an unworldliness like that of the Gospels. From them it seemed that there might spring the new hope of the world.

In the first throes of a struggle the mind of man is apt to lose the power of accurate generalization. He cannot judge soberly, for he sees the facts all tinted with his private hopes and fears; moreover, his thoughts are so centred upon instant needs that he cannot look to the horizon. No one in that early stage had any true vision of what the war must mean to the social fabric—the utter sweeping away of old debris that must follow the remodelling and transforming of every problem. This blindness as to world consequences was paralleled by the blindness of most men towards Russia, which in effect was a world by itself, as strange to the rest of Europe as the new conditions produced by the war. The statesman who marvelled at Russia's apparent strength and exulted in her alliance, did not realize that she represented a stage of development wholly unlike that of the Western nations, and that the impulsion of new forces, which elsewhere led to rapid but orderly changes, might spell in her case a relapse into anarchy. He did not see upon what insecure foundations her monarchy reposed, and how the strain of war, which could be borne by tempered steel, must crumble a cast-iron machine, however vast its dimensions. He believed too readily that the vices and corruptions of five hundred years of autocracy could be removed in a week. He forgot that a simple

and undeveloped people, while it may bear itself heroically up to a point, has not the store of corporate discipline and inherited knowledge that enables it to recover from disaster. The dreamers who saw in the Russian temperament a new revelation were not less mistaken. They forgot that the humanity which they admired in Russian idealism might as easily have its roots in moral apathy and intellectual slovenliness as in divine wisdom, and that qualities which may characterize the saint may also be an attribute of the mollusc.

Germany presented the unique case of a nation where the crisis had been long foreseen and every means had been taken to meet it. Her civil life was beautifully stage-managed ; but it was artificial, not natural. Her financial arrangements, highly impressive on paper, were in the nature of taking in each other's washing ; they were spectacular rather than sound. Her press was directed with immense care. It was given ample information of the right kind, and daily it said the things which the Government wished the people to believe. It was not till the 23rd of September that any news was allowed to leak out about the disaster of the Marne. Germany's chief mistake at the outset had been to get at variance with the opinion of neutral nations. She realized this, and at once began to angle for their sympathies with all her terrible industry, but with all her customary lack of tact and perception. The pose of the Government was that Germany could beat her foes with her right hand and conduct her ordinary life with the other. Her captains of industry issued reassuring pronouncements ; her cities were brilliantly lighted, while London and Paris were in shadow ; her cafés, restaurants, theatres, and operas went on as usual ; to a casual observer, except for the absence of young men, her streets seemed as gay and busy as ever. The nation was kept in a high vein of confidence, and scarcely one man in a thousand had a suspicion of a doubt that the war could end otherwise than in a complete triumph. The thousandth, who was in the secrets of the Government, took a graver view, for he was aware how utterly the first great plan had failed, that wholesale victory was now out of the question, and that in the long war which threatened the country's resources would be stretched to the uttermost. But he was consoled by the singular unanimity which prevailed. Civil Ministers and General Staff wrought in complete harmony ; the Burgfriede was absolute ; the Social Democrats had placed all their resources at the disposal of the Government, and provided



the most useful propagandist emissaries for neutral states. A few men like Kautsky and Bernstein, Haase and Liebknecht were beginning to criticize, but as yet there was no serious opposition.

Undoubtedly the policy of the German Government was wise. Germany needed to conserve all her confidence and power, for she could not relax her efforts for a moment, and if she was to win she must win quickly. She was rapidly falling into the position of a beleaguered city. Except through Scandinavia and Holland, Italy and Rumania, her communications with the outer world were cut, and even those few ports of entry were woefully restricted. Soon the pinch would be felt, not only in war munitions, but in the civil industries which she so feverishly toiled to maintain. Once let the spirit of the people weaken, and the palace of cards would fall. There was another reason for this policy. Foreign observers had been in the habit of describing the ordinary Teuton as stolid, unemotional, and unshakable; and German admirals and generals fostered this notion by declaring that the people with the best nerves would win, and that the German nerves were the strongest in the world. The truth was almost the opposite. Scarcely any nation suffered so acutely from nervous ailments. The German lived on his nerves; he was quick in emotion and sentiment, easily fired, a prey alike to hopes and suspicions. In his own way he was as excitable as the Latin, and he had not the Latin's saving store of common sense. He was the stuff out of which idealists are made, but also neurotics. This trait could be seen in the overweening national arrogance which he had acquired; that was the characteristic not of steady but of diseased nerves. It could be seen in his almost mystical fidelity to a plan. The neurotic loves a mechanical order; he flies to it for comfort, as a hysterical lady obeys the dictates of an autocratic physician. It could be seen in the passion of hatred which about the beginning of September rose against Britain, drowning all the lesser antagonisms against Gaul and Slav. "Hymns of Hate" became the popular form of composition; they sometimes had poetic value, but they were the scream of jangled nerves rather than the poetry of sane men. It is not easy to exaggerate the courage and self-sacrifice of the German people. Their great armies fought like heroes, their young men flocked to the colours to fill the places of the dead, their women cheerfully laid their best on the national altar. But it is important to recognize the high, strained pitch of the German temper, which could only be sustained by frequent stimulants. One such was ready to their leaders' hands. The cause for which Britain fought

was to Germany unintelligible. It seemed to her a wanton malice, a sordid jealousy of a neighbour's prosperity. Hence it was easy to convince the nation at large that they were fighting a war of defence against a malevolent world, and in such a conviction lay the secret of German unity. Even the most scrupulous among her people were not likely to question the doings of their armies, or believe the accusations of misconduct brought by their enemies, when they considered that these enemies had entered the war for purposes of naked brigandage.

As a half-way house between the belligerent and neutral Powers, we naturally turn to Turkey, which in September was still maintaining an uneasy peace. She had committed a grave technical breach of neutrality in connection with the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, and through August and September her military leaders were busy with underground preparations which were perfectly well known to the Allied Powers. German gold, arms, and men were imported through Bulgaria. A German general, Liman von Sanders, had for some years been a kind of honorary Inspector-General of the Turkish army. The two German warships remained under German control, and a large German element was introduced into the Turkish fleet. German merchant vessels, such as the *Corcorado* and the *General*, were used as naval auxiliaries, and their wireless apparatus was adapted for communication with the German General Staff. The army was mobilized, and large quantities of war stores were sent to Syria and Bagdad. Meanwhile, under German direction an attempt was made to preach a Holy War throughout the Moslem provinces. It was represented that the German Emperor was a convert to Islam, and that presently the Khalif would order a *Jihad* against the infidel. Stories were told of the readiness of the Mohammedan subjects of Britain, Russia, and France to revolt at this call, and preparations were made for the manufacture of Indian military uniforms at Aleppo to give proof to the Syrians that the Indian faithful were on their side. Egypt, which had long been the hunting-ground of German emissaries, was considered ripe for revolt, and the Khedive was known to be friendly. The Mohammedan world was believed to be a powder magazine waiting for the spark.

All this activity was not the work of a united Government. There were serious differences of opinion in the higher Turkish councils. The Sultan was consistently averse to a breach of neutrality, and did his best to prevent it. The Grand Vizier, a weak

man, could not at first be persuaded of the danger, but was as strongly against war as his nature permitted. Djavid Bey, the Minister of Finance, was well aware that the treasury was empty, and stoutly opposed the designs of the militarists. Nor were the Turkish people at large in any way hostile to the Allies. They had been offended by Britain's action in preventing delivery of their two battleships, the *Sultan Osman* and the *Reshadie*; but this feeling was passing, and they had little love for the military junta who ruled the land with an oppressiveness at least as great as in the old days of Abdul Hamid. But the Turkish people were voiceless, and the Turkish Government was in the hands of the army, which, in turn, was in the hands of the strangely named Committee of Union and Progress, of Enver, the Commander-in-Chief, and of his German patrons and paymasters. The Turkish nation had been unhappy under its old rulers, but it was infinitely more unhappy under the new. When the Young Turkish movement in 1909 drove Abdul Hamid from his throne, the Western critics of the former régime proclaimed the dawn of a nobler world, and burned foolish incense before the shrines of the revolutionaries. It needed little familiarity with Turkey and with the character of the new leaders to see that the latter end of the country would be worse than the beginning. Turkey's strength lay in her religion and in her peasantry. For a strong Turkey was needed an Islamic revival and a pure government which would relieve the burdensome taxation of her provinces. The Young Turks were at bottom anti-Islam, and, therefore, anti-national, and they were fully as corrupt, as unscrupulous, and as brutal as their predecessors. Their creed was the sort of thin Comtism which the Western world had more or less forsaken. Their aim was dominance for their own sect and faction, and their leader was Enver, a tinsel Napoleon, who dreamed of himself as the master of the Mohammedan world. They insulted the Sheikh-ul-Islam, and neglected orthodoxy, forgetting that the whole strength of Turkey lay in her faith. When honest men stood in their path they removed them in the fearless old fashion, beginning with journalists and politicians, and ending with the ablest soldiers, Nazim and Mahmud Shevket. They envisaged a Holy War, engineered by unbelievers, which should beguile the Mohammedan populations of Africa and Asia, and they naturally leaned on the broad bosom of Germany, who made a speciality of such grandiose visions.

There was little chance of such a *Jehad* succeeding. To begin with, the Committee of Union and Progress were too deeply suspect.

They had proved themselves both corrupt and incompetent. They had led Turkey to defeat in two great wars, and in the matter of oppression their little finger was thicker than Abdul Hamid's loins. Again, the ordinary Turk had no natural leaning toward the German side. In the great days of Turkey's history the Grand Vizier had been wont to assemble the standards at the Adrianople Gate for the march to Vienna, and it was in that direction that the Turkish war should roll in the view of many conservatives of a deeply conservative people. In a pure-blooded race, too, birth counts for much, and the Committee's origin was too patently mongrel. Enver was partly Polish; Djavid was a crypto-Jew from Salonika; Talaat was Bulgarian by descent; Achmet Riza was partly Magyar and partly Circassian. They talked of Islam, but their conduct had shown no love for Islam. In the Tripoli war the Arabs had been scandalized by the infidelity of the Young Turk officers, and news spreads fast through the Moslem world. The Sultan's title to the Khalifate, too, was very generally questioned. The Turks had won it originally by conquest from the Abbasids, and the Arabs had never done more than sullenly acquiesce. But a title won by the sword can only be held in the same way, and to the faithful of Islam it looked as if the sword had grown blunt in degenerate hands. Most important of all, the Turco-German alliance was breaking its head against an accomplished fact. By September the whole of Mohammedan India and the leaders of Mohammedan opinion in British Africa were clearly on the Allied side, and their forces were already moving to Britain's aid, while forty thousand Arab Moslems were fighting for France in the battles of the West. Islam had made its choice before Enver sent his commissaries to buy Indian khaki in Aleppo and inform the Syrians that the Most Christian Emperor had become a follower of the Prophet.

Of all the neutral Powers the action of Italy was most vital to the struggle, for she held a strategical position on the flank of both combatants. Her intervention on behalf of her colleagues of the Triple Alliance would menace the French right wing; and if she joined the Allies she could turn the Austrian flank, while her fleet would establish a crushing superiority against Austria in the Mediterranean. When Italy became a kingdom she had two principles in her foreign policy—a dislike of Austria, and a not unnatural suspicion of France. The assistance which Napoleon III. had given to the Risorgimento was counterbalanced in Italian eyes by the price he had exacted for it, and by the obstacles he had placed in



the way of Garibaldi's seizure of Rome. Besides, her position compelled her to be a naval Power, and France's naval activity and the French colonization of the North African littoral alarmed her susceptibilities. The direct result of the Congress of Berlin, which gave Cyprus to Britain and Tunis to France, was the formation in 1881 of the Triple Alliance between Italy, Austria, and Germany. Italy was a very new Power; the arrangement gave her powerful backers at a most critical time; and the Italian statesman Crispi did what at the moment was the wisest thing for his country. The Alliance was renewed in 1887, in 1891, in 1902, and in 1912, but in each case under changed conditions. From 1882 onwards Italy began her colonial adventures, undertaken by Crispi at the instigation of Bismarck, who aimed at setting France, Russia, and Britain by the ears. A commercial war with France did not improve her relations with the Republic. Then came dark days, days of industrial distress and colonial misfortunes, culminating in the disaster of Adowa on March 1, 1896. Italian ambition was sobered, and the disappearance of Bismarck from the European stage had removed the chief rivet which bound her to the Triplice. Relations with France began to improve, and in 1896 and 1898 commercial treaties were signed. Then, in 1904, came the Entente between France and Britain, which was tested in the following year at the Conference of Algeciras, when Italian sympathy leaned against the German claims. In 1908 Austria's annexation of Bosnia, with the consent of Germany, annoyed Italy acutely, and in 1911 her declaration of war with Turkey over Tripoli showed that she was aware of, and resented, Germany's policy in the Near East. Probably the only thing that still kept her in the Triplice was the partnership of Russia in the Entente, for she feared above all things a Slav advance to the Adriatic.

The Italian people, however, have always shown an aptitude for *realpolitik* far greater than the nation that invented the term. By 1913 Italy had acquiesced in the rise of the Balkan states, provided her own interests were safeguarded. She refused to join Austria in an attack on Serbia, and coldly rejected the Austro-German plans which were unfolded to her in the spring of 1914. Her interests were becoming clearly defined. Some day she wanted Trieste and the hinterland of Istria, and, less urgently, the Trentino. She must rule in the Adriatic, and especially must hold the Albanian port of Valona (Avlona), which was only forty miles from her shores. No great Power other than herself must dominate Albania. These were the essentials, and they brought her sharply up against both

her colleagues of the Triplice. When war broke out Italy's interests were, on the whole, opposed to those of Germany and Austria; her relations with France were good and with Britain cordial; and the sympathies of her people were by a great majority on the side of the Allies. Her neutrality, at least, was assured.

Whether she should go further was an intricate question. It is one thing to be estranged from your allies, and another thing to go to war against them. To begin with, she was jealous of her honour. More wise than Germany, she did not believe in a Machiavellianism which offended the sense of decency of the world, and she had no desire to be called unscrupulous. The bitter witticism of a French diplomatist—"Elle volera au secours du vainqueur"—was in no way justified. Italy was in a most delicate position. Her treasury was not overflowing, her debt was large, her taxation high; and though the training of her army was good, its equipment was not perfect. An immediate declaration of war against Germany was difficult for a thousand reasons, of which not the least was the appearance of bad faith. German conduct, it is true, soon gave a civilized and liberal Power a good excuse for withdrawing from the Triplice; but the immediate occasion for hostile action was still wanting, and the chance of its appearance was lessened by Germany's strenuous courtship, which culminated in the dispatch of the former Chancellor, Prince Bülow, as Ambassador to Rome. Further, since Italy was one of the few means of entry for foreign supplies into Austria and Germany, considerable sections of her population were benefited by her neutrality. On the other hand, if she delayed too long, and the Allies were victorious, she could not expect to have much share in the fruits. Italy, as the youngest of the Great Powers, was bound to consider the matter on practical lines, and it was inevitable that her real interest should be slow in revealing itself. So she contented herself with preserving an armed and watchful neutrality. But popular sympathy, being free from the responsibility of statesmanship, was not neutral. The extreme Clericals and the extreme Socialists, being united in the bonds of anti-nationalism, were in favour of neutrality at all costs. At the other end of the line the Nationalists, Republicans, moderate Socialists, and smaller oddments like the Futurists, favoured an immediate breach with Germany, and they probably carried the bulk of the people with them. The centre party, the Liberals, who were the party in office, adopted the policy of neutrality for the time being, and they had the support of the majority of the commercial

and professional classes. But all the elements in Italian life which the world has been accustomed to rate high, the idealists, the inheritors of the Mazzini tradition, were arrayed against German pretensions. Many old "red shirts" volunteered for the French and British service, and more than one descendant or kinsman of Garibaldi gave his life for the Allies' cause in the allied ranks.

The action of Rumania depended upon Italy, and on Rumania, again, largely hinged the policy of Bulgaria. Close relations existed between Rumania and Italy, since both were to some extent Latin Powers, and both were free from diplomatic entanglements at the moment. The position of the former was curious. Her king was a German of the Catholic branch of the Hohenzollerns; she had no special love for Russia, since the Peace of Berlin had deprived her of Bessarabia; and the Austrian possession of Transylvania remained a bone of contention with the Dual Monarchy. She was bound to benefit by neutrality, for she remained the one great granary open to the Teutonic League, and, after the Russians had seized Galicia, the only source of German oil supplies. Her strategic position on Austria's flank made her intervention of considerable military importance, for she could put in the field nearly half a million troops. The death of King Carol on 10th October removed the chief dynastic bond with Germany, and presently the Russian domination of the Bukovina seemed to forebode a summary cutting off of her activities as an exporter of wheat and oil. The sympathies of her people were with the Allied cause, but her course craved wary walking, and for the first months of war she maintained a decorous and observant neutrality, waiting for events to give the lead.

The situation of the smaller Baltic and North Sea states was very different. For them there could be no question of intervention, at any rate for many a day. Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were compelled by their geographical position and by their military feebleness to bear with the best grace possible the penalties of an impotent detachment. They were useful to Germany as conduits for foreign supplies; but the omnipresence of the British fleet, the unsafeness of the North Sea from mines, and our rigorous application of the doctrine of "continuous voyage" with regard to contraband, gravely interfered with their commerce. Holland was the chief sufferer. She was compelled by the Rhine Acts to forward to Germany any consignments arriving on a through bill of lading, and the British Government was forced in conse-

quence to take stringent measures, including the absolute prohibition of the export of certain food-stuffs to Dutch territory. But, in spite of all our efforts, large quantities of goods, both absolute and conditional contraband, reached Germany through Holland and Scandinavia, including materials for the making of war munitions in the shape of copper, rubber, and various chemicals. On the general question these countries stood to gain by a victory of the Allies, but political foresight is often obscured by an immediate loss to the pocket. Yet, on the whole, they conducted themselves well. The Allied cause, in spite of ceaseless German attentions, was the more popular; except, perhaps, in Sweden, which had an old dislike and dread of Russia. Holland, remembering the proclaimed ambitions of Germany and realizing that the quarrel with Britain would mean the end of her colonies, showed by her press the direction of her sympathies; and, though suffering severely herself, welcomed and sheltered many hundred thousands of Belgian fugitives with an uncomplaining generosity which deserves to be honourably remembered.

The United States of America on the outbreak of war revealed, in spite of her large German and Irish-American population, a clear bias towards the Allied cause. Something was due to those ties of blood and language which are apt to be forgotten except in a crisis; much to the hatred felt by a free democracy for a creed which put back the clock of civilization. No proud people likes to be told that it is not competent to make up its mind for itself, and America resented patronage of this kind from Germany, as she would have resented it from Britain. The German Ambassador, Count Bernstorff, who was personally popular and had married an American wife, set a-going a vast bureau of information, and sedulously cultivated the press. He was assisted by Herr Dernburg, a former German Colonial Minister, and between them they managed in a month or two to antagonize thoroughly American sentiment, and to make themselves the object of general ridicule. There can be no question but that during the first months of war, except for a few German financiers in New York, the Irish-American politicians, and the German communities of the Middle West, the feeling of the United States was clearly, even enthusiastically, on the side of the Allies. But in war it is inevitable that outsiders must suffer, and America soon began to feel the pinch. The campaign at sea which Britain conducted was bound to play havoc with some of her industries, and just as during her Civil War the loss of cotton imports almost beggared Lancashire,



so now the cotton and lumber interests in America were heavily handicapped. Some American products benefited, for all the Allies were buying in her markets, but others were gravely hurt. Copper was a case in point. American exports of this metal to the neutral states of Europe were suddenly multiplied fourfold. Undoubtedly the bulk of this was destined for Germany, who was soon in straits from her excessive expenditure of ammunition. Accordingly British cruisers seized American copper in neutral vessels and held it up, unless—which rarely happened—it was clearly proved that the goods were for *bona-fide* neutral use. This practice, while foreign to our old customs, was justified by more recent maritime law, first laid down in the American courts, as in the *Springbok* case \* during the Civil War. America forgot this fact, and protested; and, later, in her proposal to buy, at the expense of the nation, from German owners German ships interned in American ports, she infringed a fundamental rule of law. She had, indeed, ever been an ardent student of international principles, but, like most other nations, not always a consistent practitioner.

It would be as unfair to blame the United States Government for their protests and the American people for their occasional outbursts at this period as to blame British feeling during the American Civil War. When industry is disorganized and thousands suffer, there is not the time or disposition to abide calmly by the text-books, and it was highly exasperating to see a great fleet playing havoc with what till a few weeks before had been legitimate commerce. Besides, by her wavering attitude towards the Declaration of London, Britain had made it exceedingly hard for neutrals to know where exactly they stood. Happily there was a real disposition in both governments and peoples to bear with each other—in the British to abate the right of capture as far as was consistent with the demands of war, and in America to listen to reason and put a friendly construction on the occasional differences. The support of America was of high value at this time to the British people. American intervention in the quarrel at the moment would, indeed, have made little immediate difference to either side, from the smallness of her regular army and her distance from the scene of war. No statesman or soldier foresaw the length of the contest, and the part which would be played in the last stages by American soldiers who were now still in the

\* This, as well as the analogous cases of the *Bermuda* and the *Peterhoff*, were decisions of Chief Justice Chase and the Supreme Court of the United States.

schoolroom. But to have the moral assent of the great English-speaking Republic was a supreme comfort even to those in Britain who know little of the United States. Americans and Englishmen, it was realized, would continue to criticize each other to the end of time, but such criticism was only a proof how nearly they were related. Their wrangles were like the tiffs among the members of a household.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE FLANDERS CAMPAIGN : THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES.

*8th October—20th November.*

The Terrain of West Flanders—The Allied Plan—The British Army comes into Line—The Fight of the 2nd and 3rd Corps—The German Objective—The Battle of the Yser—The Defence of Arras—The First Battle of Ypres—Death of Lord Roberts—End of the Old British Regular Army.

IN this war the historian, in whatever part of the arena he moves, is accompanied by mighty shades. In the East, in the woody swamps of Masurenland and the wide levels of Poland, he has Kutusov to attend him, and Barclay de Tolly and Bagration, and the inscrutable face of Napoleon. In the West, looming like clouds through the years, he sees the shapes of Caesar and Attila and Theodoric and Charlemagne, and, as the centuries pass, a motley host of great captains—Charles of Burgundy, Joan the Maid, Bedford, Talbot and King Harry, Guise and Navarre, Turenne and Condé, the Roi Soleil, Villars, Marlborough and Saxe. Then come the shaggy leaders of the Revolution, and Napoleon again with his twenty marshals, and the pursuing Teutons, Blücher and Schwarzenberg, and Wellington, holding himself a little aloof from his ill-assorted colleagues. And last, in the clothes almost of our own day, he has the sturdy bristling figure of Bismarck and the unearthly pallor of Moltke. Of all these we have already trodden the battlefields, and now we return to the campaigning ground of one who ranks only after Caesar and Napoleon. The cold, beautiful eyes of John Churchill had two centuries ago scanned the meadows of West Flanders, and Marlborough's subtle brain had faced the very problem which was now to meet the Allied generals.

After the crushing defeat of Blenheim, the French Marshal, anxious for the safety of Paris, took to a war of earthworks and entrenchments. He could not save Flanders, but he managed

to check the invader in northern France. But after Oudenarde not all Vauban's fortifications could keep Lille from the Allies, and Villars prepared the great line of trenches from the Scarpe to the Lys, which had for their centre the high ground about La Bassée. What followed is familiar to every student of the history of the British army. Marlborough feinted against the lines, turned eastward, took Tournai, and won the Battle of Malplaquet. Villars replied with a new line of trenches, and, though the Allies took Béthune and Douai, La Bassée itself proved impregnable, and the war of entrenchments moved toward that stalemate which ended three years later with the Peace of Utrecht.\*

\* Marlborough's campaigns in West Flanders cover so much of the ground of the present war that a note may be permitted. The aim of the Allies in 1708 was to strike at France through Artois, and for this purpose the control of the navigation of the Scheldt and Lys was essential. It was the object of Vendôme's army, which marched north in the summer of 1708, to recapture Bruges and Ghent, which were the keys of the lower waterways. It succeeded in this task, but was decisively defeated by Marlborough on 11th July at Oudenarde on the Scheldt, after one of the most wonderful forced marches in history. Marlborough himself now desired to march straight into France, detaching troops to mask Lille, and co-operating with General Erle's projected descent upon Normandy—a proceeding which would have automatically led to the evacuation by the French of Ghent and Bruges. This bold stroke the caution of the Dutch deputies forbade, and the Allies sat down before the fortress of Lille, bringing their siege train by road from Brussels, since the Scheldt and the Lys were closed to them. Vendôme and Berwick united their armies, and marched from Tournai to Lille, where, however, they did not dare to offer battle, and Marlborough was prevented by his Dutch colleagues from forcing it on them. The French now attempted to hold the line of the Scarpe and Scheldt to Ghent, and cut off all convoys from Brussels; but Marlborough held Ostend, and Webb's victory of Wynendale enabled the convoys to get through.

Lille, gallantly defended by old Marshal Boufflers, fell on 9th December, and Bruges and Ghent quickly followed. The way to Paris was now dangerously open, and Villars, who took command of the French armies when the campaign opened in the spring of 1709, resolved at all costs to cover Arras, which he rightly regarded as the gate of the capital. He drew up lines of entrenchments from the Scarpe to the Lys, passing through La Bassée. Marlborough, lying to the south of Lille, made apparent preparations for an assault in force, and induced Villars to summon the garrison of Tournai to his aid. Meantime the duke had sent his artillery to Menin, and on 26th June marched swiftly eastward to Tournai, which fell to him on the 23rd of July. While the siege was going on, Marlborough led his main army back before the La Bassée lines. His object was to turn those lines by striking eastward, and entering France by way of the rivers Trouille and Sambre, and he wished to mislead Villars as to his purpose. On the last day of August, Orkney with twenty squadrons was sent to St. Ghislain to the west of Mons, and the Prince of Hesse-Cassel and Cadogan followed in the midst of torrential rains. Villars, fearing for the fortress of Mons, hastened after them, and on 7th September had arrived before the stretch of forest which screens Mons on the west, and is pierced by two openings—at the village of Jemappes in the north and at Malplaquet in the south. Mons was by this time invested by the Allies, and to cover its siege Marlborough fought the Battle of Malplaquet on 11th September. In that battle—"one of the bloodiest," says Mr. Fortescue, "ever fought by mortal men"—the Allies had 20,000 casualties as against the French 12,000; and though it was a victory, and Mons fell a month later, the season was too far advanced, and the Allies had suffered too heavily, to allow of an invasion of France. But with Mons



Had Marlborough had a free hand, the turning movement, in which Malplaquet was an incident, might well have brought his armies to the gates of Paris. Villars's qualified success showed the enormous strength of entrenchments in that corner of France which marches with West Flanders. When the Allied generals in the first days of October 1914 considered the situation, the campaign of Marlborough must have occurred to their minds. It was true that the situation was reversed, for it was the entrenching of the invader that they wished to forestall, and they moved from the south, not, as Marlborough had done, from the north. At that time they believed that they had the initiative in their hands, and their aim was to turn the German right, and free Flanders of the invaders. For this purpose—as well as for defence, should their offensive fail—it was necessary to gain the two crucial positions of La Bassée and Lille. The first gave the strongest defence in all the district, and the second was even more vital than in Marlborough's day, for it controlled the junction of six railway lines and a great network of roads, and contained large engineering works and motor factories, as well as the construction shops of the Chemin de Fer du Nord. With Lille as a position in the Allied lines the invasion from the east would be in and Tournai in their hands, they controlled the Lys and Scheldt, and protected their conquests in Flanders.

In the campaign of 1710 Marlborough's thoughts again turned westward, and on 26th June he captured Douai. But he found Arras and the road to France protected by a vast line of trenches, which Villars had constructed to be, as he said, the "*ne plus ultra* of Marlborough." The duke had to content himself with taking Béthune, Aire, and St. Venant, which gave him the complete control of the Lys. He was in a difficult position for bold action, for his political enemies were lying in wait for the slightest hint of failure to work his ruin. During the winter the work of entrenching went on, and in the spring of 1711 the French lines ran from the coast, up the river Canche by Montreuil and Hesdin, down the Gy to Montenescourt, whence the flooded Scarpe carried them to Biache; thence by canal to the river Sensée; thence to Bouchain, on the Scheldt, and down that river to Valenciennes. The story of how Marlborough outwitted Villars and planted himself beyond the Scheldt at Oisy, between Villars and France, and within easy reach of Arras and Cambrai, deserves to be studied in detail, for it is one of the most wonderful in the whole history of tactics. Thereafter the jealousy and treachery of Marlborough's enemies achieved their purpose, and the great duke's campaigns in Flanders were at an end.

Marlborough's objective was, of course, the opposite of that of the Allies in 1914. They were moving from the south-west, while he moved from the north-east, and the lines of Villars were meant to hinder attack from the east, whereas the Germans at La Bassée were entrenched against an attack from the south and west. But all the line of Northern France from the Scarpe to the Sambre was Villars's front of defence, as it was the German flank defence about 10th October, when the race to the sea was in progress. If the Allies had been able to push through the gap between Roulers and the Lys and turn the German right, they would have followed the identical strategy of the movement which led to Malplaquet, with this difference, that their object would have been not an invasion of France, but the turning of the flank of an entrenched invader.

a doubtful case. The city had been relinquished at the beginning of the German sweep from the Sambre ; but since then it and the surrounding country had reverted to the French, and was held at the moment by a division of Territorials. The occupation of Lille in force was one of the tasks entrusted to Maud'huy when, at the end of September, his new army aligned itself on Castelnau's left.

In telling the story of the opening of the West Flanders campaign, it is necessary to proceed slowly and with circumspection. No rapid summary will enable the reader to understand the nature of the task which confronted the Allied forces. It was for the moment a self-contained campaign, and concerned only four out of the Allied armies—the French Eighth Army under d'Urbal, the Belgian Army, the British Army, and the Tenth Army of Maud'huy. Its story is of three successive strategical plans which miscarried, then of three weeks of a desperate defensive which broke the enemy's attack. The record naturally divides itself into three parts—the movements which culminated in the positions reached by all four armies on or about 20th October ; the attacks upon the Allied line on the Yser, at La Bassée, and at Arras ; and the final attack delivered upon the forces holding the salient of Ypres. With the failure of the assault upon Ypres the West Flanders campaign entered upon a new phase.

In the first days of October the Allied plan, based on the assumption that Antwerp could be saved, was so to extend their left as to hold the line of the Scheldt from Antwerp to Tournai, continuing south-west by Douai to Arras, and with this as a base to move against the German communications through Mons and Valenciennes. But by 6th October it was seen that Antwerp must fall, and this plan was replaced by a second. The Belgian Army, covered by Rawlinson's British force, would retire by Bruges and Ghent to the line of the Yser to protect the Allied left, and meet, along with the new French reinforcements, any coast attack by the German troops released after the fall of Antwerp. Lille and La Bassée must be held by the Allies, and the British, pivoting on the latter place, would swing south-eastward, isolate Beseler's army of Antwerp, and threaten the north-western communications of the vast German front, which now ran from somewhere near Tournai southward to the Aisne heights. In the last resort, if the Allies were forestalled in La Bassée and Lille, the strategy of Marlborough might be used, and, instead of a frontal attack, an enveloping movement could be attempted from the line of the Lys against

the right flank of the main German armies. For this purpose the town of Menin on the Lys, south-east of Ypres, was essential as a pivot, and we shall see how the loss of this point ruined the last of the three strategical schemes. Clearly the whole of the Allied plan was contingent on the German right not being farther north than the neighbourhood of Roubaix. Joffre knew that it was rapidly extending, and it was the business of his whole northern movement to overlap it. Time was, therefore, of the essence of his problem. The strategy was well conceived. If it succeeded, the Allies might be in the position to strike a decisive blow. If it failed, then the situation would be no worse. It is true that the extension of the lines to the sea would prevent any attack upon the German communications, which would then be sheltered behind a ring-fence of arms. But, on the other hand, it would prevent any German enveloping movement, and pin down the enemy to a slow war of positions; and, since time was on the side of the Allies, he would be driven to a stalemate, which would militate disastrously against his ultimate success.

The Germans were from the start well informed as to the Allied movement, and divined Joffre's intention. By the end of September they had begun the transference of first-line corps from the southern part of their front.\* They had excellent railways behind them for this purpose, and, since they held the interior lines, most of their corps had a shorter distance to travel than those of the Allies. But the change took time, and so it fell out that the more northerly parts of the line were not manned till the Allies were almost in position. Against this drawback, however, the Germans had one great advantage. They had a fairly fresh army released from Antwerp, which could occupy the coast end, and they had through north Belgium a straight line from northern Germany for the dispatch of newly formed corps. They had quantities of cavalry, which had been of no use in the Aisne battle, to harass the left flank of the Allied turning movement, and to occupy points of vantage till their infantry came up. But it was an anxious moment for Great Headquarters. For them, not less than for the Allies, it was a race to the salt water. To the Allies' scheme they sought to oppose a counter-offensive which should give them Calais and the Channel ports, and ultimately the Seine valley for an advance to Paris. To succeed they must be first through the

\* It should be noted that the Duke of Württemberg's IV. Army was not the old IV. Army, the corps of which had been distributed between Bülow's II. and Einem's III. Armies. In the same way Prince Rupprecht's VI. Army contained only one of his old corps, the 1st Bavarian Reserve.

sally-port between La Bassée and the sea. If the British forestalled them, Beseler would be cut off, and the German front would be bent round into a square, with the Allies operating against three sides of it. The forty miles between Lille and Nieuport became suddenly the critical terrain of the war.

On 8th October Foch, who had been appointed to the general command over all the Allied troops north of Maunoury, was at Doullens, some twenty miles north of Amiens. There he was visited by Sir John French, who arranged with him a plan of operations. In all likelihood the Germans would attack the points of junction of the Allied armies—always the weak spots in a front—and it was necessary to determine these points with some care. The road between Béthune and Lille was fixed as the dividing line between the British command and Maud'huy. If an advance were possible it would be eastward, when the British right and the French left would be directed upon Lille. To the north it was arranged that the British 2nd Corps should take its place on Maud'huy's left, with the cavalry protecting its left till the 3rd Corps came into line. The cavalry would perform the same task for the 3rd Corps till the 1st Corps arrived in position. Nothing was decided about the future of Sir Henry Rawlinson's force, which was covering the Belgian retreat from Antwerp, and might be expected in a week from the direction of Courtrai.

## I.

By the close of September Castelnau's position was fixed west of Roye and Lihons, while Maud'huy had taken up ground from the north end of the Somme plateau to Lens. A Territorial division was in Lille as an advance guard of the outflanking movement, which in the case of the Tenth Army would be directed towards Valenciennes. Arras, the centre of its front, was a place of the first strategic importance. It lay below the northern edge of a plateau between Somme and Scheldt; the slopes on three sides of it provided strong defensive positions, and a network of railways connected it with every part of northern France. The beautiful old city was famous in history. France and Burgundy had contended for its possession; there Vauban raised his celebrated ramparts, there Robespierre saw the light. By 1st October Maud'huy had occupied Arras, and was pushing eastward on the road to Douai. But presently he found himself in difficulties



as the German VI. Army came into line, and for the first week of October was heavily engaged in the flats east of Arras between the Scarpe and the town of Lens. He was aware that the enemy was outflanking him, and he had only nine divisions and a cavalry corps wherewith to hold all north-eastern France till the British should arrive. He was forced back upon Arras, and soon the city was under bombardment. By the 8th he was in an awkward place. The Germans held Douai and Lens, and were closing in on Lille, from which at any moment the Territorials might be driven. Every day the enemy was increasing in numbers. The plain of West Flanders was swarming with his cavalry, and they were reported as far west as Hazebrouck, Bailleul, and Cassel, the last place only twenty miles from Dunkirk. Maud'huy's task was to cling to his position at Arras till some relief came from the Allied operations on his left. That, generally speaking, was the work of both him and Castelnau for the succeeding ten days up to 19th October. There were awkward sags in the French line at Roye, at Albert, and at Arras, but much was done during these days to straighten them out. The attackers were driven back from Arras, but, to set against this, on the 12th Lille fell to the Saxon 19th Corps. So stood the position on 19th October, the day when the Allied line was at last completed to the sea. Maud'huy's experience supplies an answer to the conundrum—why, since the possession of Lille was of the first importance, was it not held from the first with some force stronger than a Territorial division? The explanation is that the Tenth Army was far too sorely pressed to do more than retain its position. Had its offensive succeeded, had it driven the enemy from Douai towards Valenciennes, then Lille would have been occupied by its left wing, and would have formed part of its front. But it was forced back on Arras, where for weeks it could do no more than maintain its ground.

We turn to the task of the British army, which during the first three weeks of October was coming into line north of Maud'huy. The extreme left of the French Tenth Army was at the time in the villages north-west of Lens, and the Lille-Béthune highway had been fixed as its northern limit. Conneau's 2nd Cavalry Corps was engaged in watching this flank against the dangerous German enveloping movement. On 11th October Smith-Dorrien, with the British 2nd Corps, had marched from Abbeville to the line of the canal between Aire and Béthune. On his right was Conneau connecting him with Maud'huy, and on his left Hubert Gough's 2nd Cavalry Division, which was busily en-

gaged in driving German cavalry out of the forest of Nieppe. Sir John French's plan at this time for the 2nd Corps was a rapid dash upon La Bassée and Lille. Smith-Dorrien was directed to bring up his left to Merville, and on the 12th move east against the line Laventie-Lorgies, to threaten the flank of the Germans in La Bassée, and compel them to fall back lest they should be cut off between the British and Maud'huy. On the 12th the movement began in thick fog, the 5th Division on the right, and the 3rd crossing the canal to deploy on its left. Smith-Dorrien, however, found that the enemy were in great strength, four cavalry divisions and several Jäger battalions holding the road to Lille. The 2nd Corps, struggling all day through difficult country where good gun positions were rare, made some progress, but not much. His experience convinced Smith-Dorrien that an ordinary frontal attack was impossible, and he resolved to try to isolate La Bassée. His object was to wheel to his right, pivoting on Givenchy, and to get astride the La Bassée-Lille road in the neighbourhood of Fournes, so as to threaten the right flank and rear of the enemy's position on the high ground south of La Bassée.

On the 13th the wheel commenced, but it met with a strong resistance. The work of the British 2nd Corps now resolved itself into a struggle for La Bassée. On the 14th the 3rd Division lost its commander, Major-General Hubert Hamilton, who was killed by the explosion of a shell—a serious loss to the army, for he was one of the most skilful and beloved of the younger generals. Next day the division avenged its leader's death by a brilliant advance, crossing the dykes by means of planks, and driving the Germans from village after village, till they had pushed them off the Estaires-La Bassée road. On the 16th they were close upon Aubers; the following day they took the village, and late that evening carried Herlies at the point of the bayonet. This was the end of the movement of the 2nd Corps. Hitherto they had been opposed chiefly by German cavalry, and had made progress, but now they were against the wall of the main German line, the centre of the VI. Army.

While the counterstroke was impending, supports were arriving for the 2nd Corps. On 19th and 20th October there appeared west of Béthune the Lahore Division of the Indian army. The Indian Expeditionary Force consisted of two infantry divisions—the 3rd, or Lahore, under the command of Lieutenant-General H. B. Watkis, and the 7th, or Meerut, under Lieutenant-General C. A. Anderson. The force was under Lieutenant-General

Sir James Willcocks, the general then commanding the Northern Army in India, who had originally won fame in West African fighting. On a hot autumn morning the first troops had landed in Marseilles, and been received by the French with the enthusiasm due to their martial appearance and splendid dignity. Then for days the smell of wood smoke rose from the dusty hills behind Borély, strange flocks of goats thronged the streets—the first step in the Indian commissariat—and grave, bearded Sikh orderlies slipped through the southern crowds. From Marseilles the Indian Division went to camp at Orleans, and that city, which had seen so much, saw a new pageant in her ancient streets. Much had to be done before the troops were ready for the field, for an equipment adapted for an Indian year was no match for the rigours of a Flemish winter. The troops were chafing to be in action, for the honour of their country and their race was in their keeping in this far western land, where the sahibs had fallen out.

The 3rd Corps, under Pulteney, destined for the position on the left of the 2nd Corps, had completed its detrainment at St. Omer on the night of the 11th. It marched to Hazebrouck, where it remained during the 12th, and next day moved generally eastward towards the line Armentières–Wytschaete, with its advance guard on a line through the village of Strazeele. Pulteney's aim was to get east of Armentières astride the Lys, and join up the Ypres and La Bassée sections of the front. It was an impossible length of line for one corps to hold, so he had cavalry operating on both sides of him, Allenby to the north, and Conneau to the south. The Germans were found in strength at Méteren, west of Bailleul, the usual advanced force of cavalry and infantry supports hurried forward in motor buses. It was a day of heavy rain and a thick steamy fog, the fields were water-logged, aircraft were useless, and the countryside was too much enclosed for cavalry. The Germans in Méteren had no artillery, and but for the bad light would have suffered heavily from Pulteney's guns. He carried the position, drove out the enemy, and entrenched himself some time towards midnight, preparatory to a full-dress attack upon Bailleul, in which he believed that the Germans were in force. His reconnaissances, however, on the morning of the 14th showed that the enemy had retired, and that day he occupied the line Bailleul–St. Jans Cappelle.

Next day the 3rd Corps was ordered to take the line of the Lys from Armentières to Saily, where, five days before, Conneau's cavalry had met with a stubborn resistance. The

weather was still dark with fog, and there were many small bodies of the enemy about, but no position was held in force. Pulteney by the evening of the 15th was on the Lys, with the 6th Division on his right at Sailly, and the 4th Division on the left at Nieppe, a point on the Armentières-Bailleul road. Next day he entered Armentières, and on the 17th he had pushed beyond it, with his right at Bois Grenier, three miles south of the Lys, and his left at the hamlet of Le Gheir, a mile north of it. It was now ascertained that the Germans were holding in some strength a line running from Radinghem in the south, through Pérenchies, to Frelinghien on the Lys, while the right bank of the river below Frelinghien was held as far as Wervicq. On the 18th an effort was made to clear the right bank of the Lys with the aid of Allenby's cavalry corps. The strength of the Germans was still doubtful, and Pulteney had some ground for assuming that it was only the mixed cavalry and infantry he had been so far pressing back. As a matter of fact, the 3rd Corps was now approaching the main German position, as the 2nd Corps about the same time was finding it at Aubers and Herlies. That day revealed two facts—that the infantry could do nothing in the direction of Lille, and that the cavalry, in spite of some brilliant work by the 9th Lancers, could not win the right bank of the Lys. They found themselves firmly held at all points from Le Gheir to Radinghem, and their position on the night of the 18th and on the 19th represented the farthest line held by this section of our front. This—the British right centre—was destined to have one of the most awkward places in the coming battle. It was not itself the object of any great massed attack, as on the Yser, at Ypres, and at La Bassée, but it suffered from being on the fringes of the two latter zones, and, as we shall see, was gravely endangered in the German enveloping movements.

One link was necessary to connect the 3rd Corps with the infantry farther north. This was provided by the two divisions of Allenby's cavalry corps. The 2nd Division from 11th October busied itself with clearing the country of invading bands in the neighbourhood of Cassel and Hazebrouck. On the 14th it joined the 1st Division, and the corps took up positions on the high ground above Berthen on the road between Bailleul and Poperinghe. On the 15th and 16th it reconnoitred the Lys, and, till the 19th, endeavoured to secure a footing on the right bank below Armentières. On the night of the 19th Allenby's position was generally east of Messines, on a line drawn from Le Gheir to Hollebeke.



We pass now to the doings of the Antwerp garrison and the British and French covering troops. The 4th Corps, under Rawlinson—Capper's 7th Division and Byng's 3rd Cavalry Division—was in Flanders by 8th October. On the 7th Rawlinson's headquarters were at Bruges, and Admiral Ronarc'h's brigade of French Marines was at Ghent in support. On the 8th the retirement from Antwerp was in full operation, and the 4th Corps headquarters were removed to Ostend, while the 7th Division was at Ghent. Next day Antwerp had fallen, and the covering of the Belgian retreat began. The cavalry went first, to clear the country, and were at Thourout on the 10th and at Roulers on the 12th, where they took up the line from Oostnieukerke to Iseghem to cover the Ghent railway, which was threatened by roving German horse to the west and south. On that day the 7th Division and the French sailors left Ghent, forming a rearguard for the Belgians. Next day the Germans entered that town, and the following day passed through Bruges. Two days later the 3rd Reserve Corps occupied Ostend. This was from Beseler's army of Antwerp, which included also the 4th Ersatz Division.

The 7th Division, much assisted by its armoured cars, arrived at Roulers on the 13th, and the 3rd Cavalry Division reconnoitred the country towards Ypres and Menin, riding in one day over fifty miles. The only hostile activity they could learn of was in the south-west, where large enemy forces were reputed to be moving eastwards towards Wervicq and Menin from the direction of Bailleul. This was the force of cavalry and infantry supports with which, as we have seen, the 3rd Corps had had dealings. The 3rd Cavalry Division was now in touch with Allenby's cavalry in the neighbourhood of Kimmel, on the road between Ypres and Armentières. By this time the Belgian army, very weary and broken, was in the forest of Houthulst, north-east of Ypres, and had begun to extend along the line of the Yser by Dixmude to Nieuport. On the 16th the 7th Division was holding a position east of Ypres, with the 3rd Cavalry Division as advance guard on a line which ran roughly from Bixschoote to Poelcappelle. North lay the Belgians, with French supports, and to the west of Ypres two French Territorial divisions—the 87th and 89th—under the command of General Bidon. The line of the 7th Division ran from Zandvoorde through Gheluveld to Zonnebeke.

At this time Sir John French was still uncertain about the forces opposed to him. He knew of Beseler on the coast route, and was naturally anxious as to the stand which the wearied

Belgians, aided by French Territorials, marines, and cavalry, could make against him on the Yser. He also had word of a German reserve corps and a Landwehr division which had been giving trouble to Allenby's cavalry on the Lys. The far more formidable movement, of which the 7th Division was beginning to get news, was still unknown to him, and if he had heard the rumours of it, he had not been able to get verification. At that time he still believed that the extreme right of the main German force was in the neighbourhood of Tourcoing, and that Beseler's was an isolated flanking force. He did not know that Beseler was no more the outer rim of a huge serried line wheeling against the Allies from the north-east.

On 10th October four reserve corps, which were to form the main strength of the IV. Army—the 22nd, 23rd, 26th, and 27th—left Germany. One corps was rushed through by rail to Courtrai, and was, indeed, not formed till the men arrived there. The other three were concentrated in Brussels, and, without losing an hour, began their eighty-mile march westward. These corps were new formations, composed largely of Landsturm and the new volunteers, and including every type, from boys of sixteen to stout gentlemen in middle life. They were to show themselves as desperate in attack as the most seasoned veterans. By the 18th they were on the line Roulers—Menin, and the 3rd Reserve Corps, which had screened their advance, drew away to the right wing.

On the 16th the Belgians were driven out of the forest of Houthulst, and fell back behind the Hazebrouck—Dixmude railway. Their retreat uncovered the left of the British 3rd Cavalry Division, but on the following day four French cavalry divisions, under General de Mitry, cleared the forest, and re-established the line. On that night, the 17th, Sir John French decided that the moment had come to put into effect the third of his strategical alternatives. If La Bassée and Lille had proved too strong for the 2nd Corps, then Marlborough's strategy might be employed against the German right. With Menin as a pivot, commanding an important railway and the line of the Lys, a flanking movement might be instituted against Courtrai and the line of the Scheldt. Accordingly he instructed Rawlinson to advance next morning, seize Menin, and await the support of the 1st Corps, which was due in two days.

Rawlinson had an impossible task. He had to operate on a front at least twenty miles wide, and he could look for no supports till Haig arrived. Moreover, he knew of the four new German

corps, which were still hardly credited at headquarters, for on the morning of the 18th the French cavalry near Roulers captured some cyclists belonging to one of them. On the morning of the 19th he moved out towards Menin, with the right of the 7th Division protected as far as possible by Allenby's cavalry north of the Lys, while the 3rd Cavalry Division was on its left, and Mitry's French cavalry to the north of them. The cavalry to the left presently came in touch with large enemy forces advancing from Roulers. The British brigades were skilfully handled, and the 6th Brigade took Ledeghem and Rolleghehcappelle. But owing to the continued German pressure, the 7th Brigade on the left had to fall back, and in the afternoon the 6th Brigade also followed, retiring to billets in the villages of Poelcappelle and Zonnebeke, while the French cavalry held Passchendaele, a mile in advance. The progress of the infantry was summarily stopped by the advance of enormous masses from the direction of Courtrai. The nearest the 7th Division got to Menin was the line Ledeghem-Kezelberg, about three miles from the town. It had to fall back at once to avoid utter disaster, and entrenched itself on a line of eight miles, just east of the Gheluvelt cross-roads, a name soon to be famous in the annals of the war. The great struggle for Ypres was on the eve of beginning.

On that day, 19th October, the 1st Corps, under Sir Douglas Haig, detrained at St. Omer, and marched to Hazebrouck. That evening Haig was instructed to move through Ypres to Thourout, with the intention of advancing on Bruges and Ghent. That such instructions should have been given shows that the British headquarters were still very imperfectly informed about the real strength of the enemy, which the 7th Division were then learning from bitter experience. Two alternatives presented themselves to the mind of Sir John French. His force was holding far too long a line for its numbers and strength, and the natural use of the 1st Corps would have been to strengthen some part of the front, such as that before La Bassée. On the other hand, a much-battered Belgian army with a small complement of French Territorials and cavalry had sole charge of the twenty-mile line from Ypres to the sea. If the Germans chose to attack north of Ypres they would find a weakly held passage. Accordingly Haig was directed to move north of Ypres, and Sir John French bade him use his discretion should an unforeseen situation arise after he had passed the town. The unforeseen situation was not long in appearing. The 1st Corps never approached Thourout, but was detained in

front of Ypres, where it formed the left wing of the British in the great struggle.

By the 19th—to continue our course to the sea—the Belgians had fallen back nearly to the line of the Yser from Dixmude to Nieuport. The Yser is a canalized stream, which, rising near St. Omer, enters at Nieuport the canal system which lies behind the sand-dunes on the edge of the cultivated land, and connects with the salt water by several sea canals. The Belgians were nominally six divisions, but three had been reduced to the strength of brigades, and were in the last stages of exhaustion. For ten weeks they had scarcely been out of action, but their spirit was unconquered, and the gaps in their line—they were no more than 48,000 strong—were filled up by French Marines, while the British and French fleets were waiting to give them support from the sea. But the front was still dangerously weak, and on 18th October Joffre placed at the disposal of Foch the reinforcements which were to complete the French Eighth Army. It was commanded by Victor d'Urbal, a man of fifty-six, who, like Maud'huy, had been a brigadier at the beginning of the war. This new army, which not only took over the existing troops on the Yser, but acted as a reinforcement to the British left, contained at the start only Ronarc'h's marines, the four divisions of Mitry's cavalry, and the 87th and 89th Territorial Divisions. It was to grow before the end of the battle to five army corps, two Territorial divisions, and two corps of cavalry.

The 20th of October saw the whole Allied line from Albert to the sea in the position in which it had to meet the desperate effort of the Germans to regain the initiative and the offensive. The gate was closed, but it might yet be opened. Maud'huy's Tenth Army lay on a line from east of Albert, through Arras, west of Lens, to just west of the château of Vermelles, south of the Béthune-La Bassée railway. Smith-Dorrien's 2nd Corps ran from Givenchy, west of La Bassée, through Herlies and Aubers to Laventie. Then came Conneau's corps of French cavalry, and then Pulteney's 3rd Corps, which was astride the Lys east of Armentières. North of it came Allenby's cavalry corps, with the 1st Division south of Messines, and the 2nd Division between Messines and Zandvoorde. Then, forming the point of the Ypres Salient, came the 7th Division east of the Gheluvelt cross-roads, with, on its left, between Zonnebeke and Poelcappelle, Byng's 3rd Cavalry Division. North-west of them, between Zonnebeke and Bixschoote, Haig's 1st Corps was coming into position. North, again, lay de Mitry's French cavalry, till the French Marines were reached at Dixmude. Thence



lay the Belgian front to the sea, where the guns of the Allied warships were waiting for the enemy. This line of battle, little short of a hundred miles, was held on the Allied side by inadequate forces. Maud'huy had four corps; the British were three and a half corps strong—seven divisions of infantry; the Belgians were in effectives little more than a corps; d'Urbal had still only a brigade of marines and two divisions of Territorials. The British force had an average strength of only 1.6 rifles per yard of front. The enemy at the start had eleven corps of infantry and a far greater strength of cavalry and guns. Moreover, he was rapidly reinforcing his front from the rest of his line, so that in all the points of contact he had a clear, and in many a crushing, superiority of numbers.

A word must be said on the terrain of the impending battles. From the peatfields and cornlands of the Santerre, where Castelnaud was engaged, the plateau of Albert rises between the Somme and the Scarpe. It is the ordinary Picardy upland—hedgeless roads, unfenced fields, lines of stiff trees, and here and there the shallow glen of a stream. At the northern end Arras lies in its crook of hills, a beautiful and gracious little city on the edge of the ugliest land on earth. The hills sweep north-westward to the coast of the Channel, ending in Cape Grisnez, and bound the valleys of the Scarpe, Scheldt, Lys, and Yser, forming in reality the western containing wall of the great plain of Europe, of which the eastern is the Urals. This plain of the Scheldt and its tributaries is everywhere of an intolerable flatness. A few inconsiderable swells break its monotony, such as Kemmel ridge, north-east of Bailleul, and the undulations south of Ypres and at La Bassée, and there is, of course, the noble solitary height of Cassel. But in general it is flat as a tennis lawn, seamed with sluggish rivers, and criss-crossed by endless railways and canals. Ten miles north of Arras, at the town of Lens, the Black Country of France begins. From there to Lille and Armentières is the mining region of the Pas-de-Calais. Every road is lined with houses; factory chimneys and the headgear of collieries rise everywhere; and the whole district is like a piece of Lancashire or West Yorkshire, where towns merge into each other without rural intervals. The Lys flows, black and foul, through a land of industrial debris. North of the Lys towards Ypres we enter a countryside of market gardens, where every inch is closely tilled, and the land is laid out like a chessboard. There are patches of wood, some fairly large, like the forest of Houthulst, between Ypres and Roulers, but these are no

barrier to military movements. Everywhere there are good roads, partially paved after the Flemish fashion, and the only obstacles to the passage of armies are the innumerable canals. As we move toward the Yser we pass from Essex to the Lincolnshire Fens. The fields are lined and crossed with ditches, and the soil seems a compromise between land and water. Then comes the great barrier of the sand-dunes, which line the coast from Calais eastwards, and through which the waterways of the interior debouch by a number of sea canals. Beyond the dunes are the restless and shallow waters of the North Sea.

On such a line the Allies on 20th October awaited the attack of the enemy, as they had done two months before on the Sambre and the Meuse. Now, as then, they were outnumbered; now, as then, they did not know the enemy's strength; now, as then, their initial strategy had failed. The fall of Antwerp had destroyed the hope of holding the line of the Scheldt; the German occupation of La Bassée and Lille had spoiled the turning movement against the German right; the failure at Menin and the swift advance of the new German corps had put Marlborough's device out of the question. Once more, as at Mons and Charleroi, they waited on the defensive.

## II.

The map will show that in the Allied battle-line, which on the 19th October stretched from Albert to the sea, two points would give results of special value to an enemy attack. The first was Arras, which was a centre on which lines converged from West Flanders and north-eastern France, and from which lines ran down the Ancre valley to Amiens and the basin of the Seine, to Boulogne by Doullens and by St. Pol, and northward to Lens and Béthune. The second was La Bassée, which gave a straight line by Béthune and St. Omer to Calais and Boulogne. If the Germans sought possession of the Channel ports, then their natural road was by one or the other. A third possible route lay along the seashore by Nieuport, where the great coast road runs behind the shelter of the dunes. If the aim of the enemy was the speedy capture of Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne, a successful breach in the Allied front at Arras or La Bassée would enable them to realize it. Possible, but far less valuable for the same purpose, was the road which followed the sea. It was the shortest route to

Calais, but it had no railway to accompany it, and it led through some of the most difficult country which a great army could encounter.

In war the shortest way to an end is often the longest. By this time the German Staff, as we have seen, under the inspiration of Falkenhayn, had decided that at all costs the Channel ports must be won. Their main reason was twofold. They thought that the capture of Calais and Boulogne would gravely alarm public opinion in Britain, and interfere with the sending of the new levies, which, in spite of their official scepticism, they fully believed in and seriously dreaded. In the second place, with the coast in their possession, they hoped to mount big guns which would command the narrows of the Channel, to lay under their cover a mine-field, and to prepare a base for a future invasion of England. It was argued that such a measure would complicate the task of the British fleet, which would be compelled to watch two hostile bases—the Heligoland Bight and the French Channel coast—and that in such a division of tasks the chance might come for a naval battle, in which the numerical superiority would not be with Britain. Other motives lay behind the plan, but these constituted the chief strategical reasons. Now, with this purpose, the best road was clearly not the shortest. If the Allied front could be pierced at La Bassée, or, still better, at Arras, and a gate were forced for the passage of the German legions, then two of the Allied armies would be cut off and penned between the enemy and the sea. In this way the chief purpose of all campaigns would be effected, and a large part of their opponents' strength would be destroyed. Further, a magnificent line of communications to the coast would be opened up—communications which could not be cut, for all the Channel littoral and hinterland east of Antwerp would be in German hands. If, on the other hand, a way were won along the shore by Nieuport, all that would happen would be that the Allies' left would fall back to the line of heights which ends in Cape Grisnez, and their front, instead of running due north from Albert, would bend to the north-west in an easy angle. Further, the coast road would be a poor line of communications at the best, and most open to attack by a movement from Ypres or La Bassée.

Besides these three points where a road might be won, the Allied line revealed another special feature. East of Ypres, on 19th October, it bent forward in a bold salient, the legacy bequeathed by an offensive which had failed. If this could be

maintained, it obviously provided a base for flank attacks upon any force advancing across the Yser or through La Bassée. It was, therefore, the aim of the Germans to flatten out the salient as soon as possible. The importance of Arras, La Bassée, Ypres, and Nieuport must be kept constantly in mind if we would understand the complicated campaign which follows. The first two were the points where a successful piercing movement would have results of the highest strategic value, not only opening up the road to the Channel, but putting the whole Allied left wing in deadly jeopardy. The third was a salient which, if left alone, would endanger any German advance. The fourth, if gained, would give a short, if difficult, route to Calais, and would turn the Allies' flank, though not in a fashion to put it in serious danger.

It is a sound rule in war that strength should not be dissipated. On this principle it is at first sight hard to discover an explanation for the course which the Germans actually followed. For they attacked almost simultaneously at all four points, and for three desperate weeks persisted in the attack. Now, had the movement against Arras succeeded all would have been won, and the salient at Ypres would have only meant the more certain destruction of the British army. Had the attack from La Bassée been successfully carried through, the same result would have been attained; though, since the success was won farther from the Allied centre, a smaller section of the Allied force would have been isolated. Had even the worst of the three roads been chosen for a concentrated action and the coast route cleared for the passage of the German armies, then the Allied flank must have fallen back from Ypres and from before La Bassée. The explanation seems to be that Falkenhayn was imperfectly informed of the position of the Allies. His aim was to outflank the Allied front while its left was still in the air, and for this purpose he gave his four new corps to the right-wing commander, the Duke of Württemberg. He did not conceive that his main problem was to find the weak points in a front already formed. This view was not without reason, and it carried with it the corollary that the rest of the still mobile Allied front from Arras northward should be pressed hard so as to prevent a reinforcement of the left.\* As it happened, that front was more stable than he anticipated, and what were meant for holding attacks developed by the odd logic of circumstance into full-dress battles,

\* That this was the German intention seems to be shown by the order given on 14th October to the VI. Army. See the General Staff monograph, *Schlacht an der Yser und bei Ypern im Herbst 1914* (Eng. trans.), p. 7.



so that the action instead of concentrating in the coast terrain became a series of alternating efforts to break the front at presumably weak points. This in turn was an intelligible plan—it was Foch's in 1918—but Falkenhayn had leaned so heavily on the first scheme that his balance was shaken before he essayed the second.

Our first task is to consider the assault on the Yser, and the subsidiary attacks at La Bassée and Arras, before dealing with the supreme effort against Ypres. But let it be clearly understood that all four attacks were to a large extent contemporaneous, and directed against a single battle-front. The fighting on the Yser merged, towards the south, in the fighting north of Ypres; the struggle for Ypres was closely connected with the battle which raged from La Bassée to the Lys; and the stand of the 2nd Corps at La Bassée was influenced in many ways by the fate of Maud'huy's left wing north of Lens. If this fact is realized, it is clearer and more convenient to deal separately with each attack, since each had its own special objective.

We turn first to the country along the canal which is usually dignified by the name of the Yser, the little river which feeds it from the south-west. Between Nieuport, the port on the coast a mile from the ocean, and the town of Dixmude, where the Yser turns sharply to the south-west, is a distance of ten miles. On the left bank, at an average distance of a mile and a half from the Yser, runs a single-line railway from Dixmude to Nieuport, through the villages of Pervyse and Ramscappelle. No railway crosses the canal between Dixmude and Nieuport, but it is spanned by several bridges. The most important is at Nieuport, where the main coast road runs along the harder soil of the dunes. A second lies about midway in the reach, where a road comes east from Pervyse just below the point where the canal loops into a pocket. At Dixmude itself, which lies on the eastern bank, a road and a line run to Furnes and Dunkirk. A number of small creeks of brackish water enter the Yser on both sides, and all around are low, marshy meadows, a little below the level of the sea. One or two patches of drier and higher land are found along the edge of the canal, but nowhere, till the dunes are reached on the actual coast, are there any slopes which can be said to give gun positions or a commanding situation. The whole country is blind and sodden, as ill fitted for the passage of troops and heavy guns as the creeks and salt marshes of the Essex coast.

On 16th October, as we have seen, the right wing of the retreating Belgian army had reached the forest of Houthulst, north-east of Ypres, and had been driven out of it by the German movement from Roulers. They now drew in that wing, and by the following day were aligned on the east bank of the Yser, with French cavalry and Territorials connecting them with the British army to the south. King Albert had under 50,000 in his command, and to a man they were battle-weary. But the presence of their king, and the consciousness that they were waging no longer a solitary war, but were arrayed with their Allies, spurred them to a great effort. The Yser was the natural line for them to hold, for, more than French or British, they were accustomed to war among devious water-courses. The plan was to hold strong bridge-heads at Nieuport and Dixmude, and an advance line covering them on the east bank of the river. Behind this lay the line of the Yser itself, and, should that be lost, the Nieuport-Dixmude railway embankment for a last stand. The disposition was as follows: The 2nd Division held Nieuport, Lombartzyde, and the ground to the sea; the 1st Division on its right extended to the middle of the Tervaete bend, including the Schoorbakke bridgehead; on its right lay the 4th Division, and beyond it the 3rd, which along with the Breton marines provided the garrison of Dixmude; the 5th Division was echeloned between St. Jacques Cappelle and Driegrachten; and the 6th Division continued the front to the junction with the French Territorials at Boesinghe. The only reserves were part of the 3rd Division and a division of cavalry.

By the evening of the 17th Beseler, to whom the first coast attack had been entrusted, had moved west from Middelkerke and Westende, and was in position just east of Nieuport. Early on the morning of the 18th he attacked with the object of seizing the Nieuport bridge. The Belgians were drawn up east of the Yser, holding in strength the three main bridges. The sudden and violent assault of a superior force upon the left wing of a much-enduring army would in all likelihood have succeeded, and if at this date King Albert had been pushed well back from the Yser towards Furnes, Beseler would have been in Dunkirk in two days and in Calais the day after. But at this most critical moment help arrived from an unexpected quarter. Suddenly the German right resting on the sand-dunes found itself enfiladed. Shells fell in their trenches from the direction of the sea, and, looking towards the Channel, they saw the ominous grey shapes of British warships. Two and a half centuries before, when Turenne met the Spaniards at the

Battle of the Dunes, he had been greatly aided by Cromwell's fleet, which shelled the enemy's wing. History repeated itself almost in the same spot, and once more the French front fought in alliance with the British navy.

Germany had never dreamed of any serious danger from the sea. She believed from the charts that off that shelving shore, with its yeasty coastal waters, there was no room for even a small gunboat to get within range, and she did not imagine that Britain would venture her ships in such perilous seas. Every student of naval history knows the dangers of the "banks of Zeeland," and at this very place, between Nieuport and Ostend, the *San Felipe*, from the Spanish Armada, had been wrecked. But at the outbreak of war three strange vessels lay at Barrow, built to the order of the Brazilian Government. Broad in the beam, and shallow of draught, they had been intended as patrol ships for the river Amazon. In August the Admiralty, with fortunate prescience, purchased these odd craft, which appeared in the Navy List as the *Humber*, the *Severn*, and the *Mersey*. They were heavily armoured, and carried each two 6-inch guns mounted forward in an armoured barbette, and two 4.7 howitzers aft, while four 3-pounder guns were placed amidships. Their draught was only 4 feet 7 inches, so that they could move in shoal water where an ordinary warship would run aground. With the first news of the German advance along the coast the Admiralty saw the value of their purchase. On the evening of 17th October the three monitors \* left Dover under the command of Rear-Admiral the Hon. Horace Hood, and sailed for the Flemish coast. The German attack on the 18th had hardly started when Hood began his bombardment. Beseler brought his heavy guns into action, but they were completely outranged, and several batteries were destroyed. For days this strange warfare continued. Admiral Hood's flotilla was presently joined by other craft, chiefly old ships of little value, for the Admiralty did not dare to risk the newer ships in so novel a type of battle. French warships acted with the British, and the bombardment extended east to Ostend. The Germans were unable to retaliate. Their big guns did not reach us, their submarines

\* The term "monitors" is not strictly accurate as applied to these vessels. The original *Monitor* was a low-freeboard, light-draft turret ship, invented by Ericsson, which fought the *Merrimac* in Hampton Roads during the American Civil War. Its appearance, when cleared for action, was not unlike a big submarine operating on the surface. The vital feature of the *Monitor*, apart from its light draught, was that its guns were mounted in a central closed turret, so that they could be trained in any direction and used in narrow channels where broadsides would be impossible.

could not manœuvre in the shallow water, and the torpedoes which they fired, being set at a much greater depth than the monitors' draught, passed harmlessly beneath their hulls. Our naval guns swept the country for some six miles inland, and the German right was pushed away from the coast. On the 20th Lombartzyde had fallen, but it was presently recovered. Nieuport was saved, and the German attack on the Yser was possible only beyond the range of the leviathans from the sea.

But the battle for the coast route was only beginning. The Duke of Würtemberg was now in command, and with him were the four new reserve corps—the 22nd north of Dixmude, the 23rd against Dixmude itself, and the 26th and 27th against the weak Belgian right and British left. Joffre still hoped to press east along the coast, and Grossetti's 42nd Division—the heroes of Foch's stand at the Marne—which arrived on the 22nd, was ordered to advance from the Nieuport bridgehead. Grossetti, assisted by the guns of Hood's ships, pushed on to Westende, but on the 24th he was hurriedly recalled to reinforce the Belgian centre. For during the previous days, out of range of the British fleet, the Germans had been struggling desperately for the Yser passage. On the 22nd they had won the west bank in the Tervaete loop, and also carried the Schoorbakke bridgehead, while the strife at Dixmude had been bitter and continuous. On Friday, the 23rd, a body of Germans succeeded in crossing at St. Georges and forcing their way almost to Ramscappelle on the railway. There, however, the Belgians drove them back, and that day they gained no further footing on the western bank. On that night, too, no less than fourteen attacks were made upon Dixmude, and were driven back by Admiral Ronarc'h and his sailors. Next day another great effort was made at Schoorbakke by the bridge which carried the Pervyse road, and also at a point in the loop of the canal immediately to the south. About 5,000 men crossed, and at midnight they held the positions they had gained. On Sunday, the 25th, there was a crossing in greater force, and for a moment it looked as if the line of the Yser had been lost. But in that country it is one thing to gain a position on the west bank and quite another to be able to advance from it through the miry fields, intersected with countless sluggish rivulets. As the Germans tried to deploy from each bridgehead they were met with stubborn resistance from the Belgian and French entrenched among the dykes. For three days those ragged battalions fought a desperate action in the meadows. Every yard was contested, and the German progress was slow and costly. But even in



country where the defence has a natural advantage numbers are bound to tell, and the steady stream of German reinforcements was pressing back the French and Belgians. By the 28th they had retired almost to the Dixmude-Nieuport railway, which ran on an embankment above the level of the fields. The Emperor was with the Duke of Württemberg, and under his eye the German attack grew hourly in impetus. Another day, and the Allied left might have been broken.

In that moment of crisis the Belgians played their last card. Once more they sought aid from the water, and, after the fashion of their ancestors, broke down the dykes. The past week had been heavy with rains, and the canalized Yser was brimming to its bank. Under cover of the British naval guns the Belgian left had been hard at work near Nieuport. They had dammed the lower reaches of the canal, and on the 28th achieved their purpose. The Yser lipped over its brim, and spread in great lagoons over the flat meadows. The German forces on the west bank found themselves floundering in a foot of water, while their guns were water-logged and deep in mud. On the few dry patches they kept their ground, but all the intervening land was impossible. The Belgians had fallen back to a position behind the Dixmude-Nieuport railway.

Duke Albrecht did not at once give up the attempt. The floods were bad enough, but they were still not impassable. It was clear that the Belgians had larger schemes of inundation, and it became the German aim to win to the railway before these could be put into execution. The obvious point of vantage was the village of Ramscappelle, and on 30th October, moving from the bridgeheads at St. Georges and Schoorbakke, the Würtembergers advanced to the attack. They waded through the sloppy fields covered with several inches of water, and by means of "table-tops"—broad planks carried on the men's backs—crossed the deeper dykes. So furiously was the attack pressed home that they won to the railway line and seized Pervyse and Ramscappelle. But early on the 31st troops of the French 42nd Division and of the 2nd and 3rd Belgian Divisions counter-attacked, and after a stubborn battle drove out the Germans from the villages, and hurled them back into the lagoons. The Würtembergers retired from the ruins, and found a position in the meadows where the flood was comparatively shallow.

But in the meantime the Belgians, largely under the inspiration of General Bridges of the British Mission, had prepared a greater destruction. Far and wide in all the drainage area of the Yser

they had succeeded by now in opening the sluices of the canals. Suddenly on all sides the water rose. Dammed at its mouth, and fed by a thousand little floods, the Yser spread itself in seething brown waves over the whole country up to the railway line. The depth now was not of inches but of feet. The Germans, caught in the tide, were drowned in scores. A black nozzle of a field gun would show for a moment above the current, and presently disappear. All the while the Allied gun positions at Nieuport and Ramscappelle and Pervyse, and west of Dixmude, shelled the drowning troops. Some escaped; many struggled out on the wrong side, and were made prisoners. The attack had failed finally and disastrously. The Emperor, who had watched the operations through his glasses, shut them up and turned away. The coast road was barred, and he must look for success farther south, at Ypres or La Bassée.

The flooding of the Yser marked the end of the main struggle for the shortest route to Calais. The Belgians and French now held a line resting on Nieuport, and following the railway by Ramscappelle and Pervyse to Dixmude. Between them and the enemy lay a mile or two of muddy waters. Nieuport was safe, for it was protected by British guns from the sea. The Belgians, who had lost a quarter of their effectives, began to counter-attack on the left, and pushed forward advanced posts towards Middelkerke and Westende. Presently the Germans had evacuated the whole of the west bank of the Yser—that is, the few dry spots where troops could maintain themselves. They managed to check the Belgian advance in the north, and on 7th November retook Lombartzyde. But in this section their main efforts were now directed against Dixmude, which was the only point where a bridgehead, if won, could be maintained. The defence of the town by Ronarc'h's marines and the Belgian 5th Division was one of the conspicuous feats of the war. It was a vital position, for its capture by the Germans at any time before 1st November would have meant the turning of the Belgian right. The Belgian batteries had been placed with great skill to the west of the town, and a big flour mill gave a good observation post. The garrison had desperate fighting on 16th October, and won a few days' respite, which enabled them to complete their defences. On the 19th they had to meet a heavy attack, which drove in their advanced posts upon the town. Thereafter they had to face a terrific bombardment, which battered Dixmude to pieces. On the night of the 23rd and 24th they had to withstand fourteen different assaults. But the

defence held firm, and Dixmude did not fall till its fall was no longer vital. After a heavy bombardment the Germans took the town on the evening of 10th November, and captured a few hundred prisoners. But it gave them no advantage. There was still half a mile of floods between them and the Belgians, and by that date the first fury of their attack had been gravely weakened. For in the great battle to the south, after three weeks of constant struggle, the flower of their armies had been repelled everywhere from the Allied lines.

We pass over the twenty miles which separate Dixmude from the Lys, and which constituted the terrain of the Battle of Ypres. Pulteney's 3rd Corps, with Allenby's cavalry on its left and Conneau's French cavalry on its right, occupied, as we have seen, on 19th October, a position running from east of Messines southward by the east of Armentières to a point to the west of Radinghem. The fighting on this section may be most conveniently dealt with in connection with the Battle of Ypres, of which it formed the extreme right. For the present we will consider only the work of Smith-Dorrien's 2nd Corps, which was engaged in repelling the German advance from Lille against La Bassée and Béthune.

On 19th October the 2nd Corps held a line pivoting on Givenchy in the south, and then running east in a salient north of the La Bassée-Lille road to the village of Herlies, where it bent westward to Aubers, and connected with Conneau's cavalry in the neighbourhood of the La Bassée-Armentières highway. The 5th Division was on the right of the front, and the 3rd Division to the north of it. The Germans, the centre of the Crown Prince of Bavaria's huge command, held La Bassée, the line of the La Bassée-Lille canal, and all the country immediately to the south and east. Smith-Dorrien's first aim had been to strike at the line La Bassée-Lille in the neighbourhood of Fournes, and so, with the help of the French Tenth Army, isolate the La Bassée position. But from the 20th onward, as he felt the surge of the great German advance, his whole energies were devoted to maintaining his ground and blocking the passage to Béthune and the west.

The main attack at La Bassée lasted for ten days—from 22nd October to 2nd November—by which time the current of direction in the battle had moved farther north against Ypres. On the morning of the 22nd came the first big attack. The 5th Division on the British right was driven out of the village of Violaines, on the road between Givenchy and Lorgies. Smith-Dorrien could now judge of

the strength of the German movement, and he saw that the advanced position of the 3rd Division on his left was untenable. Accordingly that night he withdrew to the line running from just east of Givenchy by Neuve Chapelle to Fauquissart, due south of Laventie. Two days later, on the 24th, the enemy attacked heavily along the line; but the British artillery prevented him getting to close quarters. By this time the 2nd Corps, which had been for ten days more or less constantly under fire, was getting exhausted, and it became very necessary to find supports. These had arrived a few days before in the shape of the Lahore Division of the Indian Corps. The Ferozepore Brigade of that division had been sent on the 22nd to support Allenby's cavalry, and the remainder was now used to support the left rear of the 2nd Corps. One brigade was entrenched on the extreme left, to take over the ground formerly occupied by Conneau's French cavalry, which was needed farther north.

On the 27th the Germans got into Neuve Chapelle, and for the succeeding few days the main fighting continued on the left of the 2nd Corps. Next day the Indian troops were given their first taste of battle, with various British battalions interspersed among them, and the 2nd Cavalry Brigade in support. Their task was the re-taking of Neuve Chapelle. The 3rd Division was by this time very weary and reduced, the staff work had become faulty, and the attack was inadequately supported, except by the cavalry. The fighting on both sides was desperate and confused, and the Germans flung the bodies of their dead from their trenches to make cover under which they could advance. No sooner had the British won a hundred yards than the counter-attack came, and the lines swayed backwards and forwards, before and behind the ruins which had once been Neuve Chapelle. At the end of the month the Meerut Division arrived, and two days later came the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade and the Jodhpur Lancers. The Indian Corps was now constituted under the command of Sir James Willcocks, and the much-tried 2nd Corps was partially withdrawn into reserve. Its rest was short, for very soon some of its battalions had to be sent north to take their part in the fight which raged round Ypres. The defence of the La Bassée gate was now chiefly in the hands of the Indians, aided by two and a half British brigades and most of the 2nd Corps Artillery.

The story of the next three weeks in this section is one of repeated attacks, gradually slackening off owing to the concentration against Ypres. Ypres was a providential intervention, for it is difficult to believe that, if the attack had been delivered with



the violence of the fighting on 22nd October and earlier, our line could have held its position. As it was, it was slowly forced back till it ran from Givenchy, to which we stubbornly clung, north by Festubert towards Estaires. An attack on Givenchy on 7th November failed signally. Then for a fortnight the campaign here degenerated into an artillery duel, and our men were given a welcome chance of improving and elaborating their line of trenches.

On the work of the Indians we have Sir John French's testimony: "Since their arrival in this country and their occupation of the line allotted to them, I have been much impressed by the initiative and resource displayed by the Indian troops. Some of the ruses they have employed to deceive the enemy have been attended with the best results, and have doubtless kept superior forces in front of them at bay." In Britain the ordinary man, accustomed to tales of the prowess of Sikh and Gurkha, was inclined to think them invincible, and forget that they had been brought to an unfamiliar type of warfare, and that the finest troops in the world may get into trouble in an uncongenial task. The strangeness of the whole situation—the great howitzer shells, the endless stream of shrapnel, the mole warfare of the trenches, and all the black magic of the white man's war—cannot but have shaken the nerves at first of the Indian soldiers. It is to their eternal credit that they so quickly recovered; but when the line wavered and cracked here and there it meant a heavy mortality among the flanking troops, and among the white and native officers. Of their splendid courage there was never a moment's doubt. When Indian troops broke it was just as often forward as backward. We must remember, too, that they had very few chances, except in night work, of revealing their special excellences. Too rarely came the charge, where Sikh and Pathan and Gurkha could show their unique *élan*. When it came, the Germans learned what many a frontier tribe has known to its cost. The climate was their chief enemy. Many who watched their arrival at Marseilles had given them four months to last out in a European winter. Up till 5th November there was incessant fog and rain. Then came a week of bright weather till the 11th, and then a bitter sleet began, to be followed by frost, and presently by snow. The Indian can stand cold of a kind, as he proved in the Tibetan Expedition, but his diet and his habits ill fit him to resist long-continued wet and the damp cold of our north. They suffered terribly from the unfamiliar weather, and physical stamina gave way in many whom no enemy's fire could unnerve.

The last stroke against Arras, which, properly dealt, would have been the greatest menace of all, was delivered from 20th October to 26th October. Before that the battle had raged chiefly around Maud'huy's left centre. The possession of Lens gave the Germans one great advantage, for south from the town ran a railway which, three miles east of Arras, connected with the main line, Arras-Douai-Lille. When the German front was pushed west of this it was in possession of perfect lateral communications. The first German aim was to drive in Maud'huy's left, and, by extending to Béthune, come in on the right rear of the British 2nd Corps. If it succeeded, then an advance from Lille would force the British back into the triangle between the Germans and the Channel. But after the 20th the objective changed to Arras itself, and Prince Rupprecht seemed to awake to the immense possibilities of the gate which the city provided. If he succeeded, not only would the Channel ports fall to him, not only would he recover the northern road to Paris, but he would have achieved what had always been the main German objective and split the Allied line into two parts, which would be driven asunder by a broadening wedge. The southern half might retire in good order, but there would be no way of escape for the northern. It was what Hausen had done on the Meuse, what the Duke of Würtemberg had failed to do at Vitry, and Bülow at Rheims. Had some of the German forces which at the time were butting their heads against the Ypres Salient or struggling in the Yser bogs been brought to aid the task, the odds are that it would have been accomplished.

Happily for Maud'huy's slender army the attack was not made one of the major operations. It was vigorously pressed, but advantage could not be followed up, because of the growing demands of the northern battles. The German guns were now near enough to bombard the city a second time, and for a week shells rained in its ancient streets. The Hôtel de Ville, one of the oldest and finest buildings in France, was ruined, and whole quarters were reduced to debris. But the destruction of Arras did not give the enemy possession. All attempts to break the French line failed, and by the 26th Maud'huy had begun to retaliate. The traditional *furia francese* has never been seen to better purpose than in the counter-attacks which in many places pushed the Germans out of their advanced trenches, and restored to the French some of the little villages in the flats of the Scheldt. Bit by bit the circle was widened, till Arras was beyond the reach of the German



NORTH SEA

Ostend

BRUGES

Dunkirk

Bergues

Allenby's Cavalry

advance of 34 Corps B.E.F.

advance of 2nd Corps B.E.

Retirement of the 1st Div.

1st Corps

1st Corps

Reference

- Allies .....
- Railways, single & double .....
- Main Roads .....

Scale of Miles  
0 5 10 15 20

THE MAPPA CO., LTD., LONDON

THE BATTLE-GROUND OF WEST FLANDERS  
(Oct.-Nov. 1914).

(Facing p. 352.)





(Opp. No. 1) THE BATTLE-GROUND (Scale 1:50,000)



howitzers, and the inhabitants began to return to their ruined dwellings. The enemy held the Vimy ridge, and his lines lay in a loop round the city, but he was never fated to enter its streets. By the beginning of November the attack had failed; and it was not likely to be renewed, for Prince Rupprecht's best corps were demanded for the north, where before Ypres was being fought the longest, bloodiest, and most desperate combat in the history of British arms.

### III.

The little city of Ypres, now only the shade of its former grandeur, stood midway between the smoky industrial beehive of the Lys and the well-tilled flats of the Yser. Once it had been the centre of the wool-trade of Flanders, and its noble Cloth Hall, dating from the twelfth century, testified to its vanished mercantile pre-eminence. No Flemish town could boast a prouder history. It was the red-coated burghers of Ypres who, with the men of Bruges and Courtrai, marched in July 1302 against Count Robert of Artois, and inveigled the chivalry of France into a tangle of dykes and marshes, from which few of the proud horsemen escaped. Seven hundred pairs of gilded spurs were hung in the Abbey church of Courtrai as spoil of battle, and the prowess of the burgher infantry on that fatal field established the hitherto despised foot-soldier as the backbone of all future armies. Ypres possessed, too, a link with British records. Till the other day, in one of its convents hung the British flag which Clare's regiment, fighting for France, captured at Ramillies. The town stood on a tiny stream, the Yperlée, a tributary of the Yser, which had long ago been canalized. A single-line railway passed through it from Roulers to the main Lille-St. Omer line at Hazebrouck. An important canal ran from the Yser in the north to the river Lys at Comines, and two miles south of the town, at the village of St. Eloi, turned eastward, bending south again in a broad angle between Hollebeke and Zandvoorde. To the east there were considerable patches of forest between Bixschoote and the Lys valley. A series of slight ridges rose towards the south and east in a curve just inside the Belgian frontier from west of Messines to the neighbourhood of Zonnebeke. For the rest, the country was dead flat, so that the spires of Ypres made a landmark for many miles. On all sides from the town radiated the cobbled Flemish roads,

the two main highways on the east being those to Roulers and to Menin, with an important connecting road cutting the latter five miles from Ypres at the village of Gheluveit.

On the evening of the 19th the Allied offensive had virtually ceased. First one and then another of the three strategic possibilities had been frustrated. We were aware that at last we had reached the main German front in position everywhere from Lille to the sea, and daily growing in numbers which threatened to fall in a tidal wave upon the thin and far-stretched Allied line. But Sir John French, though cognizant of the enemy's strength, was not yet fully informed about its details, and he made one more effort to break through with a counterstroke. Haig with the 1st Corps had, as we have seen, arrived behind the front on the 19th, and had been directed to move to the north of Ypres in the direction of Thourout. "The object he was to have in view," Sir John wrote, "was to be the capture of Bruges, and subsequently, if possible, to drive the enemy towards Ghent." Had it been possible, the move would have had great strategic advantages. It would have hemmed in Beseler on the sea coast, and prevented reinforcements reaching him from the south, while it would have provided a basis for a turning movement against the flank of the enemy's main front. But Sir John French had his doubts about its possibility, and Haig was instructed after passing Ypres to use his own judgment. As the 1st Corps advanced to the north of Ypres it had Bidon's divisions of French Territorials and Mitry's cavalry on its left, extending from Bixschoote north through the forest of Houthulst. On its right it had Byng's 3rd Cavalry Division, and south of Byng was the British 7th Division—the two forming Rawlinson's 4th Corps, which was directed to conform generally to Haig's movements.

The 1st Corps had borne the brunt of the fighting on the Aisne, and had had no rest save such as was afforded by the journey to the north. On Tuesday, the 20th, it advanced to a line extending from Bixschoote to the cross-roads a mile and a half north-west of Zonnebeke, with the 2nd Division on the right of its front, and the 1st Division on the left. That day it had no fighting, but the cavalry on its flanks were heavily engaged. Byng's Division not only protected its right, along with detachments of French Territorials, but was feeling its way some miles in advance. The French in Poelcappelle were driven out by shell-fire in the afternoon, and Byng was compelled to fall back towards Langemarck. The position, therefore, on the morning of the 21st was—on the extreme

left, north-east of Ypres, divisions of Bidon's Territorials and some of Mitry's cavalry; then the British 1st Division, between Bixschoote and Langemarck; then the 2nd Division, extending to near Zonnebeke, with Byng's 3rd Cavalry Division in support on its right rear; then the 7th Division to the east of the Gheluvelt cross-roads. In front of Messines was Allenby's Cavalry Corps, which had been attempting in vain the crossings of the Lys; after which came the line of the 3rd Corps, ten miles long, through Armentières.

Clearly the immediate posts of danger in the Allied front were the extreme left, between Bixschoote and Dixmude, and the right centre around Zandvoorde, between the 7th Division and Allenby. But on the 21st the main enemy attack was not at these points. It was delivered against the point of the salient between Zonnebeke and Becelaere. Haig with the 1st Corps advanced successfully till about two o'clock in the afternoon, when news came of trouble on his flanks. The French Territorials on the left were driven out of the forest of Houthulst, and they and their supports of the 1st French Cavalry Corps retired across the Yser Canal. At the same time he was informed that the 7th Division and Allenby's 2nd Cavalry Division beyond it were heavily attacked, and it became necessary to halt on the line Bixschoote-Langemarck-St. Julien-Zonnebeke. That line marked the limits of the last British offensive. Thourout and Bruges were now as inaccessible as the moon. The main fighting was along the front of the 7th Division, against which the left wing of the German IV. Army was thrown. In the first place, its left was enfiladed by a German movement against Zonnebeke, and for a little looked like having its flank turned. Not till the afternoon could Haig's 2nd Division link up with it at the level crossing of the Ypres-Roulers railway and safeguard that danger-point. In the centre at Becelaere the Germans succeeded in temporarily piercing our line. On the extreme right a fierce assault was made from the direction of Houthem against Gough's 2nd Cavalry Division in Klein Zillebeke. The only reserves available were Byng's 3rd Cavalry Division, and from it Kavanagh's 7th Brigade was directed to support the left of the 22nd Brigade, which it did successfully till help came from the 2nd Division. The 6th Cavalry Brigade was hurried south to Zandvoorde in the afternoon, and filled the gap, occupying the two canal crossings at Hollebeke. By the evening the whole of Byng's cavalry had been moved to the right of the 7th Division, linking up with Gough between Hollebeke and Wytshaete.

That evening Sir John French in Ypres had an anxious consultation with Haig and Rawlinson, Mitry and Bidon. It was now abundantly clear that the most they could do was to hold the Ypres Salient from the Lys to Dixmude till Joffre could send help—a length of fully thirty miles. For that purpose there was the 1st Corps, the 3rd Corps (though Pulteney had also his own separate battle to fight), the 7th Division of the 4th Corps, three divisions of British cavalry, Mitry's 2nd French Cavalry Corps of four divisions, and Bidon's two divisions of French Territorials—all told about 100,000 men, and some of the troops not of the first line. French's first task was to arrange matters in Ypres, which had become congested with French Territorials, and it was decided that they should immediately move out and cover the flank of Haig's 1st Corps. He had that day seen Joffre, who had told him that he was sending the 9th Corps to Ypres, that d'Urbal's further forces were being rapidly concentrated, and that he hoped presently to take the offensive. This help, however, could not arrive before the 24th, and for three days the present line must maintain its precarious and extended front.

Thursday, the 22nd, was a heavy day all along the line. Haig, being compelled to send help to the 7th Division, could do little but maintain his defence. This he did with much loss to the enemy; but late in the evening a violent assault was made upon his left, north of Pilkem, and the line was partially broken. Farther south, the 7th Division was in a difficult place. In consequence of the attack upon its 22nd Brigade it had retired its left, and so made a sharp new salient with the left of the 21st Brigade. Farther south there was a long line from the Zandvoorde ridge to south of Messines held by the 3rd and 2nd Cavalry Divisions in trenches. Round Hollebeke the Germans pressed hard, both with artillery and infantry attacks, and their snipers greatly troubled our men. But they did not press hard enough, for this long cavalry line was our weak spot, and an attack in force would have broken it and uncovered Ypres. Farther south Pulteney had been having some anxious days. On the 20th the Germans had attacked the advanced posts of the 12th Brigade on his left, driven them in, and occupied Le Gheir, just north of the Lys. A counter-attack, however, drove back the enemy with great loss, and occupied the abandoned trenches. At this time the 3rd Corps was divided into two halves by the Lys, and on the 22nd the centre held by the 16th Brigade was heavily attacked from Frelinghien. It was rapidly becoming necessary to shorten the line by drawing in the



right, and bringing Conneau's 2nd Cavalry Corps nearer Armentières.

The failure of the attack of the 22nd, especially that part delivered by the 23rd Reserve Corps between Bixschoote and Langemarck, seems to have convinced the enemy that he could not break through in that quarter. The new corps had fought with the utmost gallantry, but in the nature of things they could not be depended upon in a protracted battle; they must do their work with their first impetus or not at all.\* Accordingly Falkenhayn began in all haste to pull out troops wherever they could be spared and to constitute a new Army Group under the Würtemberger von Fabeck, to operate between the IV. and VI. Armies against the Allied front from Ypres to the Lys. This new group by itself was to start with almost the equivalent in numbers of the British army, and was presently to consist of nine divisions of infantry and four of cavalry. Its assembly was to be complete on the 29th, and its attack was fixed for the 30th. Its formation would allow the Duke of Würtemberg's left wing to concentrate against Dixmude and the Ypres Canal.

On the morning of Friday, the 23rd, the position was as follows: There was a bad dint in the British front on the left of the 1st Division; there was an ugly salient on the left of the 7th Division, where the left of the 21st Brigade was brought to a sharp angle by the "refusal" of the 22nd Brigade; and a dint in the line of the 21st. An effort was made during the day to get rid of these dangers. Major-General Bulfin restored the left of the 1st Division, and a furious enemy attack was beaten off in the Langemarck neighbourhood. There was also a determined frontal attack on the 7th Division. That evening there came a welcome relief. The 31st Division of the French 16th Corps and the bulk of the French 9th Corps arrived and took over part of the front held by the British 1st Corps, which was thus enabled to extend to the south, and relieve the hard-pressed 7th Division of the northern end of the line near Zonnebeke.

Next day, the 24th, there was an advance upon our extreme left. The French 9th Corps, the veterans of Sézanne and Rheims, pushed forward between Zonnebeke and Poelcappelle, and won a fair amount of ground. In the evening the line of the 1st Division was taken over by French Territorials, and the former moved to behind our front at Zillebeke. The 2nd Division had now

\* See Freytag-Loringhoven's comments, *Deductions from the World War* (Eng. trans.), pp. 118-119

closed up, and relieved the left wing of the 7th, and this relief came just in time. For on that day the point of the salient gave way at last, and the Germans entered the Polygon Wood at Reytel, west of Becelaere, destined to be the scene of much desperate fighting in the days to come. The next day, Sunday the 25th, saw the advance of the left continued. It was in the nature of a counter-offensive to relieve the pressure on the centre, and it temporarily succeeded, some guns and a number of prisoners being taken. In the centre itself the Germans did not follow up their achievement in the Polygon Wood; they were waiting for von Fabeck. At night an enveloping attack was made on the salient held by the 20th Brigade, at Kruseik, north-east of Zandvoorde. It was renewed in force just before the wet misty dawn, and all the morning the battle continued to rage around Kruseik—a critical place, for if the salient were broken there, the enemy would gain possession of the Zandvoorde ridge. The situation was saved after midday by a brilliant counter-attack of the 7th Cavalry Brigade, who were in trenches at Zandvoorde. Meanwhile the extreme British right under Pulteney had been hard pressed, and it was resolved temporarily to shorten that part of the line which was south of the Lys. The falling back of the 2nd Corps in the south, and the continuation of its front northward by Indian troops, enabled Pulteney to take up this new position with the less risk.

On the evening of the 26th it was becoming clear that the line of the 7th Division was dangerously advanced. All that night its commander, General Capper, was busy readjusting his brigades. The work was completed on the 27th, when the front ran as follows: On the extreme left north of Bixschoote, the 87th French Territorial Division; from Bixschoote to Zonnebeke, the four divisions of Mitry's cavalry, two divisions of the French 9th Corps and one of the French 16th; from east of Zonnebeke to the Gheluvelt cross-roads, the 1st Corps; from Gheluvelt cross-roads to east of Zandvoorde, the 7th Division; from Zandvoorde to Klein Zillebeke, Byng's 3rd Cavalry; from Klein Zillebeke to east of Messines, Allenby's Cavalry Corps; and south of that, Pulteney's 3rd Corps. That evening Sir John French visited Haig at Hooze and discussed the position of affairs. The 7th Division for a month had been engaged in continuous marching and fighting, and had suffered terrible losses. It was resolved, accordingly, that Rawlinson should return to England to supervise his 8th Division, which was now being formed, and that the 7th Division and the 3rd Cavalry Division should be temporarily attached to the 1st Corps.

Next day, the 28th, there was little but shelling on the front—a dangerous lull which heralded the storm. The enemy was gathering his forces for a cumulative attack upon our whole line. On the morning of Thursday, the 29th—about 5.30 a.m.—the British Staff learned of his intentions, for they intercepted a wireless message. It was the beginning of the sternest phase of the struggle. The great battles of the world have not uncommonly been fought in places worthy of so fierce a drama. The mountains looked upon Marathon and Thermopylæ, Marengo, Solferino, and Plevna; mighty plains gave dignity to Châlons and Borodino; the magic of the desert encompassed Arbela and Omdurman; or some fantasy of weather lent strangeness to death, like the snow at Austerlitz or the harvest moon at Chattanooga, against which was silhouetted Sheridan's charge. Ypres was stark carnage and grim endurance, without glamour of earth or sky. The sullen heavens hung low over the dank fields, the dripping woods, the mean houses, and all the sour and unsightly land. It was such a struggle as Lee's Wilderness stand, where, amid tattered scrub and dismal swamps, the ragged soldiers of the Confederacy fought their last battles. The worst danger lay in the re-entrants of the Salient, to the north between Bixschoote and Zonnebeke, and to the south between Zandvoorde and Messines. The Germans, confident in their numbers, attacked both, and they also drove hard against the point of the bastion in front of Gheluvelt. As time went on, their main efforts tended to concentrate on the southern re-entrant, where were the cavalry and the right of the 7th Division.

Very early on Thursday, the 29th, in a sudden spell of clear weather, the first wave broke against the centre of the 1st Corps at the point of the Salient on the Gheluvelt cross-roads. The 1st Division was driven back from its trenches, and all morning the line swayed backwards and forwards. It was an enemy reconnaissance to prepare the way for von Fabeck. Before the dark we had recaptured the ridge at Kruseik, and the front line was reconstituted. South of Kruseik the fighting fell chiefly to Byng's cavalry, while on Pulteney's front there was an attack on Le Gheir and in the Ploegsteert Wood.

The 30th was the day fixed for the main German attack. The Duke of Württemberg was to press hard on his left against Bixschoote and Langemarck, while the left of a new Reserve Corps, the 27th, was directed on Gheluvelt. South of it, against the southern side and the southern re-entrant of the Salient, moved

von Fabeck—his 15th Corps under Deimling south of the Menin road, and his 2nd Bavarian Corps against the Messines ridge.

Daylight had scarcely come when the battle began. Würtemberg attacked with his three new reserve corps, took the ruins of Bixschoote, but failed to drive the French from Langemarck. The impact of von Fabeck was first felt by Byng's cavalry on the Zandvoorde ridge. The Germans, who had a great weight of heavy artillery, simply blew the British trenches to pieces. One troop was buried alive, and soon the whole division was compelled to fall back a mile to the ridge of Klein Zillebeke on the north. The right of the 1st Division was thus uncovered, and had to retire to conform, and the Gheluvelt Salient was made so much the sharper. Allenby sent up supports, and with their assistance Byng held the Klein Zillebeke position till the evening, when Lord Cavan's 4th (Guards) Brigade from the 2nd Division arrived and took over the line. Haig resolved that the front from Gheluvelt to the angle of the canal south of Klein Zillebeke must be held at all costs. He accordingly brought the 2nd Brigade to the rear of the line held by the 1st Division and Cavan's 4th Brigade, placed a battalion in reserve at Hooge, and borrowed from the French 9th Corps three battalions and one cavalry brigade. The situation was desperately critical. If the Germans got to the Ypres-Comines canal at any point north of Hollebeke they would speedily cut the communications of the 1st Corps holding the Salient, and nothing would lie between them and Ypres itself. The Emperor was with his men, and had told the Bavarians that the winning of the town would determine the issue of the war. It would certainly have determined the fate of the 1st Corps, which would have been wholly isolated and destroyed.

Nor was the peril at Klein Zillebeke all. Farther south the 2nd Cavalry Division had been driven out of Hollebeke, and had fallen back on St. Eloi, on the Ypres-Armentières road. The 1st Cavalry Division sent help, and were presently themselves in heavy conflict round Messines, which was bombarded by the German howitzers. Pulteney, too, in the south had the line of the 11th Brigade broken at St. Yves, but the situation was saved by a spirited counter-attack. It was becoming clear that he would have to extend his already attenuated line, for the 1st Cavalry Division on his left must be supported. Reinforcements had already come up from the 2nd Corps. Four battalions, which had been relieved by the Indian troops, were posted at Neuve Eglise, on the road between Messines and Bailleul, as reserves for the cavalry. Lastly, to



conclude the events of this day, the 7th Division north of Zandvoorde was given no peace. The Allied line at this point was now retired to just east of Gheluveld, where was the 7th Division, and to the corner of the canal near Klein Zillebeke, where were the 2nd and 4th Brigades, assisted by General Moussy's troops from the 9th French Corps, and with the 3rd Cavalry Division in reserve.

Next day came the crisis. The fighting began early along the Menin-Ypres road, and presently the attack developed in great force against Gheluveld village. The 1st Division was driven back from Gheluveld to the woods between Hooge and Veldhoek. The headquarters at Hooge of the 1st and 2nd Divisions were shelled. General Lomax was badly wounded, General Monro stunned, six of their staff officers were killed, and the command of the 1st Division passed to General Landon of the 3rd Brigade. Meantime the falling back of this part of the line menaced the flank of the 7th Division. On the right of that division Bulfin's detachment, consisting of the 2nd and 4th Brigades, which had been brought there from the 1st Corps, was exposed by the attack on its left-hand neighbours. The 2nd Brigade fell back just as the right of the 7th Division, having been reinforced, advanced again. This right—the 20th Brigade—was once more exposed, but it managed to cling to its trenches till the evening. On Bulfin's right Moussy, with his troops of the 9th French Corps, was struggling hard to keep the line intact towards Klein Zillebeke. He had come to the British assistance in the nick of time, as sixty years before the French army at the same season of the year had come to our aid at Inkerman. He held the line, but he could make no advance to relieve the sore-pressed 2nd and 4th Brigades. Indeed, at one moment it looked as if he might have to yield, but he saved himself by novel reinforcements. He bade the corporal commanding his escort collect every available man, from cooks to cuirassiers. It was a repetition of Bruce's camp followers at Bannockburn, or the charge of Sir John Moore's ambulance men in the retreat to Corunna. The bold adventure prospered, and Moussy was able to hold his ground.

Meantime Allenby's cavalry farther south were also in straits. He had the whole line to hold from Klein Zillebeke by Hollebeke to south of Messines, and his sole reinforcements at the time were the two much exhausted battalions of the 7th Indian Brigade sent up from the 2nd Corps. Byng, who had his 3rd Cavalry Division at Hooge, pushed forward Kavanagh's 7th Brigade, which

took up the line south of the canal near Hollebeke, while the 6th Brigade was ordered to clear the woods between Hooge and Gheluveld. Even with this assistance Allenby had no light task. He had to hold up the advance of two nearly fresh German corps till such time as Conneau could be brought from the south and the troops of the French 16th Corps could arrive. Hollebeke and most of the Messines ridge were lost, and the position there was not the least desperate of that desperate day.

Between two and three o'clock on Saturday, the 31st, was the most critical hour in the whole battle. The 1st Division had fallen back from Gheluveld to a line resting on the junction of the Frezenberg road with the Ypres-Menin highway. It had suffered terribly, and its general had been sorely wounded. On its right the 7th Division had been bent back to the Klein Zillebeke ridge, while Bulfin's two brigades were just holding on, as was Moussy on their right. Allenby's cavalry were fighting an apparently hopeless battle on a long line, and it seemed as if the slightest forward pressure would crumble the Ypres defence. The enemy was beginning to pour through the Gheluveld gap, and at the same time pressed hard on the whole arc of the Salient. There were no reserves except an odd battalion or two and some regiments of cavalry, all of which had already been sorely tried during the past days. French sent an urgent message to Foch for reinforcements, and was refused. At the end of the battle he learned the reason. Foch had none to send, and his own losses had been greater than ours. Between 2 and 2.30 Haig was on the Menin road, grappling with the crisis. It seemed impossible to stop the gap, though on its northern side some South Wales Borderers were gallantly holding a sunken road and galling the flank of the German advance. He gave orders to retire to a line a little west of Hooge and stand there, though he well knew that no stand, however heroic, could save the town. He foresaw a retirement west of Ypres, and French, who had joined him, agreed.

And then suddenly out of the void came a strange story. A white-faced staff officer reported that something odd was happening north of the Menin road. The enemy advance had halted! Then came the word that the 1st Division was re-forming. The anxious generals could scarcely believe their ears, for it sounded a sheer miracle. But presently came the proof, though it was not for months that the full tale was known. Brigadier-General Fitz-Clarence, commanding the 1st (Guards) Brigade in the 1st Division, had sent in his last reserves and failed to stop the gap. He then

rode off to the headquarters of the division to explain how desperate was the position. But on the way, at the south-west corner of the Polygon Wood, he stumbled upon a battalion waiting in support. It was the 2nd Worcesters,\* who were part of the right brigade of the 2nd Division. FitzClarence saw in them his last chance. They belonged to another division, but it was no time to stand on ceremony, and the officer in command at once put them at his disposal. The Worcesters, under very heavy artillery fire, advanced in a series of rushes for about a thousand yards between the right of the South Wales Borderers and the northern edge of Gheluvelt. Like Cole's fusiliers at Albuera, they came suddenly and unexpectedly upon the foe. There they dug themselves in, broke up the German advance into bunches, enfiladed it heavily, and brought it to a standstill. This allowed the 7th Division to get back to its old line, and the 6th Cavalry Brigade to fill the gap between the 7th and the 1st Divisions. Before night fell the German advance west of Gheluvelt was stayed, and the British front was out of immediate danger.

On Sunday, 1st November, the wearied British line received reinforcements. Divisions from the French 16th and 20th Corps arrived to take over part of the line held by Allenby's cavalry. With them came Conneau's 2nd Cavalry Corps, transferred from its place between the 2nd and 3rd British Corps. That day was remarkable for the hard shelling of our front, and two isolated attacks, one against Bulfin's 2nd and 4th Brigades at Klein Zillebeke, and the other against Allenby on the Messines ridge. The first was beaten back with the assistance of Byng's cavalry, who continued for the next few days to act as a general reserve and support to the Gheluvelt Salient. But the assault on Allenby was a serious matter. During the night the Germans, breaking through on the left flank of the 1st Cavalry Division, reached the edge of Wytschaete, on the Ypres-Armentières road. In spite of a most gallant defence by the French the Bavarians carried the village before the evening. Messines, too, had been since early morning in German hands, making an ugly dent in our line, which now ran from Le Gheir to the west of Messines, west of Wytschaete, by St. Eloi and Klein Zillebeke to west of Gheluvelt.

For five days the battle slackened into an artillery duel, and our weary men had a breathing space. On 5th November the line

\* The Worcesters—the old 29th and 36th—had a great record in the Peninsula. The 29th was at Talavera and Albuera, and Wellington called it "the best regiment in the army." The 36th lost a fourth of its numbers at Salamanca, and suffered heavily at Toulouse.

was readjusted, and some relief was given to the 7th Division, which was now reduced from 12,000 men and 400 officers to a little over 3,000. Fourteen battalions from the 2nd Corps, two Territorial battalions, and two regiments of Yeomanry now took their share of the line. The enemy also rearranged his plans. The Fabeck group had failed in its main purpose, and must be strengthened both with guns and troops. The two minor groups under Gerok and Urach on the Messines ridge had also exhausted their impetus. Accordingly a new group was formed under Linsingen, consisting of the 15th Corps and a corps under Baron von Plattenberg, which included a composite division of the Prussian Guard. This group was to attack on the 11th north of the Ypres—Comines canal. Meantime, on Friday the 6th, a sudden assault was made on the Klein Zillebeke position, held by Bulfin's 2nd and 4th Brigades and Moussy's French division. In the afternoon the French on the right towards the canal were driven in, and Cavan's 4th Brigade was left in the air. The only reserve available was Byng's cavalry north of the Zillebeke—Klein Zillebeke road. Kavanagh deployed the 1st and 2nd Life Guards, with the Blues in reserve behind the centre, and his advance assisted the French to resume their trenches. But the German attack was being pressed in force, and the French came back again upon the Household Cavalry, a couple of whose squadrons were doubled across the road to stem the rush. For a moment there was wild confusion—French, British, and the oncoming Germans being mingled together in the village street. Major the Hon. Hugh Dawnay, who had come from the Headquarters Staff to command the 2nd Life Guards, led his men to the charge, and inflicted heavy losses upon the foe. Two hundred years before, the French *Maison du Roi* had charged desperately in Flemish fields, the splendid *Gants glacés*, with their lace and steel, their plumed hats and mettled horses. Very different was the attack of the British Household Cavalry—mud-splashed men in drab charging on foot with the bayonet. In this action Hugh Dawnay fell, but not before his advance had saved the position. In him Britain lost one of the most brilliant of her younger soldiers, most masterful both in character and in brain, who, had he lived, would without doubt have risen to the highest place. He would wish no better epitaph than Napier's words: "No man died that night with more glory—yet many died, and there was much glory."\*

Once more came a period of ominous quietness. It lasted

\* *Peninsular War*, Book XVI., ch. 5.



through the 8th, 9th, and 10th, when nothing happened but a little shelling. Then on Wednesday, the 11th, came the supreme effort. As Napoleon had used his Guards for the final attack at Waterloo, so the Emperor used his for the culminating stroke at Ypres. The 1st and 4th Brigades of the Prussian Guard \* were launched on both sides of the Menin road. At first they used their parade march, and our men, rubbing their eyes in the darkness of the small hours, could scarcely credit the portent. Long before they reached the shock our fire had taken toll of them, but so mighty is discipline that their impact told. The 1st Brigade and the left brigade of the 3rd Division bore the brunt of the charge, and at several points the enemy pierced our front and won the woods to the west. Thence he was presently driven out with heavy losses, and his 1st Regiment, which had got beyond the Nonne Bosch Wood, was checked and routed by the 2nd Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. A line of strong-points prepared by Haig's engineers was the high-water mark of the attack. On that day fell Brigadier-General Charles FitzClarence, V.C., commanding the 1st Brigade, the hero of 31st October, a soldier whose military skill was not less conspicuous than his courage.

With the failure of the Prussian Guard the enemy seemed to have exhausted his vitality. His tide of men had failed to swamp the thin Allied lines, and, wearied out, and with terrible losses, he slackened his efforts and fell back upon the routine of trench warfare. To complete the tale we must glance at what had been happening on the extreme left of the Ypres Salient, where the bulk of Dubois' 9th Corps held the line from Zonnebeke to Bixschoote, and linked up with the battle on the Yser. He had with him to complete his front Bidon's Territorial divisions and most of Mitry's 1st Cavalry Corps, and against him came, as we have seen, the bulk of the new German formations. The enemy tried to press beyond the ruins of Bixschoote to the canal, the winning of which would have turned the Ypres position on the north—an objective much the same as the corner of the Ypres-Comines canal at Klein Zillebeke. In spite of desperate efforts he failed to advance at that critical point, and Langemarck remained untaken. By 15th November the vigour of the assault was ebbing, as it had ebbed four days before at the point of the Ypres bastion.

On 12th November and the following days a spasmodic assault

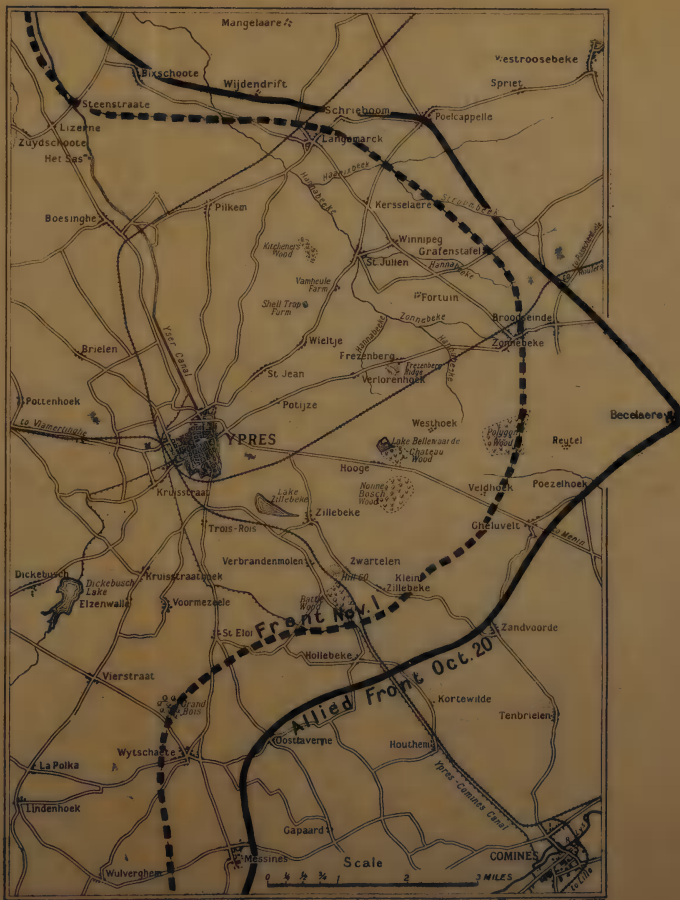
\* The brigades—thirteen battalions in all—comprised the 1st and 3rd regiments of Foot Guards, the Kaiser Franz Grenadier Regiment, No. 2, the Königen Augusta Grenadier Regiment, No. 4.

was made on the Klein Zillebeke positions, and along the whole line towards Messines. On the 16th an attempt was made on the southern re-entrant, which failed, and the shelling of Ypres continued, till its Cloth Hall and its great Church of St. Martin were in ruins. On the 17th the German 15th Corps made a desperate effort at the same point, but was repulsed. Presently further French reinforcements came up, and the sorely tried British troops were relieved from the trenches which they had held for four stubborn weeks. The weather had changed to high winds and snow blizzards, and in a tempest the First Battle of Ypres died away.

First Ypres must rank as one of the most remarkable contests of the war ; it is certainly one of the most remarkable in the record of the British army. Let us put the achievement in the simplest terms. Between Armentières and the sea the Germans had, apart from their cavalry, which was double that of the Allies, thirty-one divisions and thirty-two battalions, a total of 402 battalions, as against 267 Allied battalions. The greater part of their troops were of the first line, and even the new formations were terrible in assault—more terrible than the veterans, perhaps, for they were still unwearied, and the edge of their keenness was undulled. The immature boys and elderly men, who often fell to pieces before our counter-attacks, came on with incredible valour in their early charges. They were like the soldiers of the Revolution—the more dangerous at times because they did not fight by rule. Against the part of this force which faced them the British opposed five infantry divisions, three of them very weak. In the actual Salient of Ypres they had three divisions and some cavalry. For the better part of two days one division held a front of eight miles against two army corps. At all stages the Germans had an immense superiority in guns. In this mad *mellay* strange things happened. Units became hopelessly mixed, and officers had to fling into the breach whatever men they could collect. A subaltern often found himself in command of a battalion ; a brigadier commanded one or two companies, or a division, as the fates ordered. At one moment a certain brigadier had no less than thirteen battalions under him. We can best realize the desperate nature of the struggle from an order of Sir Henry Rawlinson issued to the 7th Division. “ After the deprivations and tension,” he said, “ of being pursued day and night by an infinitely stronger force, the division had to pass through the worst ordeal of all. It was left to a little force of 30,000 to keep the German army at bay while the other British

# THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES.

(Facing p. 366.)





THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPPEB.  
(MAY 2, 1862.)





corps were being brought up from the Aisne. Here they clung on like grim death, with almost every man in the trenches, holding a line which of necessity was a great deal too long—a thin, exhausted line—against which the prime of the German first-line troops were hurling themselves with fury. The odds against them were about eight to one; and, when once the enemy found the range of a trench, the shells dropped into it from one end to the other with terrible effect. Yet the men stood firm, and defended Ypres in such a manner that a German officer afterwards described their action as a brilliant feat of arms, and said that they were under the impression that there had been four British army corps against them at this point. When the division was afterwards withdrawn from the firing line to refit, it was found that out of 400 officers who set out from England there were only 44 left, and out of 12,000 men only 2,336.”

The result was due in the first instance to Foch's masterly handling of his slender command. He inspired in his whole force a spirit of desperate resolution, and he used his scanty reserves to the best purpose. The leadership of all the corps commanders was beyond praise, and on Haig fell the heaviest task. But Ypres was, like Albuera, a soldiers' battle, won by the dogged fighting quality of the rank and file rather than by any great tactical brilliance. There was no room and no time for ingenious tactics. Rarely, indeed, in the history of war do we find a great army checked and bewildered by one so much inferior in size.\* Strategically it can be done. Instances will be found in Napoleon's campaigns, and not the least remarkable was Stonewall Jackson's performance in the spring and summer of 1862. While McClellan with 150,000 men was moving against Richmond, and Banks with 40,000 men was protecting his right rear, Jackson with 3,000 attacked Shields at Kernstown. He was beaten off, but he returned to the assault, and for three months led the Federal generals a wild dance in the Shenandoah valley. As a result, Lincoln grew nervous: Shields was not allowed to co-operate with McClellan; M'Dowell's corps was detached from McClellan to support him; the attack upon Richmond ended in a fiasco; and presently Antietam was fought and the invasion of Virginia was at an end. In that campaign 175,000 men were absolutely paralyzed by 16,000. Ypres is not such a tale. The Allied strategy failed, and all that

\* An instance is Davout's performance on the French right at Austerlitz. With 11,000 men he held the Russian right—40,000 to 50,000 strong—while Napoleon stormed the Pratzen plateau and broke the Russian centre. But Austerlitz lasted for less than a day, and Ypres for more than three weeks.

remained was a seemingly hopeless stand against a torrential invasion. It is to the eternal honour of our men that they did not break, and of their leaders that they did not despair.

A price must be paid for great glory, and the cost of Ypres was high. The total loss to the combatants was not far from the losses of the North during the whole of the American Civil War. On the British side whole battalions virtually disappeared—the 1st Coldstream, the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, the 2nd Wiltshires, the 1st Camerons. One divisional general, two brigadiers, nearly a dozen staff officers fell, and eighteen regiments and battalions lost their colonels. Scarcely a house famous in our stormy history but mourned a son. Wyndham, Dawnay, FitzClarence, Wellesley, Cadogan, Cavendish, Bruce, Gordon-Lennox, Fraser, Kinnaid, Hay, Hamilton; it was like scanning the death roll after Agincourt or Flodden.

“ O proud death !

What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,  
That thou so many princes, at a shot,  
So bloodily hast struck ? ”

Ypres was a victory, a decisive victory, for it achieved its purpose. The Allied line stood secure from the Oise to the sea; turning movement and piercing movement had alike been foiled, and the enemy's short-lived initiative was over. He was now compelled to conform to the battle which the Allies had set, with the edge taken from his ardour, and everywhere gaps in his ranks. Had they failed, he would have won the Channel ports and destroyed the Allied left, and the war would have taken on a new character. Ypres, like Le Cateau, was in a special sense a British achievement. Without the splendid support of d'Urbal's corps, without the Belgians on the Yser and Maud'huy at Arras, the case would have, indeed, been hopeless, and no allies ever fought in more gallant accord. But the most critical task fell to the British troops, and not the least of the gain was the complete assurance it gave of their quality. They opposed the blood and iron of the German onslaught with a stronger blood and a finer steel. Their shooting was so perfect that it disguised the thinness of their ranks, and convinced the enemy that they possessed a great strength in machine guns instead of the regulation two per battalion. Where all did gallantly it is invidious to praise. The steady old regiments of the line revealed their ancient endurance; the cavalry did no less wonderful work on foot in the trenches than in their dashing charges at Mons and the Marne; the Household Brigade, fighting in an

unfamiliar warfare, added to the glory they had won before on more congenial fields ; the Foot Guards proved that their incomparable discipline was compatible with a brilliant and adroit offensive ; the gunners, terribly outmatched in numbers and weight of fire, did not yield one inch ; the few Yeomanry regiments and the one Territorial battalion showed all the steadiness and precision of first-line troops. " I have made many calls upon you," wrote Sir John French in a special order, " and the answers you have made to them have covered you, your regiments, and the army to which you belong with honour and glory." And again in his dispatch : " I venture to predict that the deeds during these days of stress and trial will furnish some of the most brilliant chapters which will be found in the military history of our times." It is no more than the truth. And to the Field-Marshal himself, whose patience and coolness were among the sources of victory, we may well apply Sherman's homely testimonial \* to Grant, and no soldier can seek for higher praise. If fate had rendered the strategy of Marlborough impossible, Sir John French had none the less fought his Malplaquet.

Within hearing of the guns of Ypres, roaring their last challenge, the greatest British soldier passed away. Lord Roberts landed at Boulogne on 11th November on a visit to his beloved Indian troops. On the 12th he was at the headquarters of the corps, and went about among his old friends, speaking their own tongue, and greeting many who had fought with him in the frontier wars. To the Indian soldier he was the one Englishman who ranked with Nikelsaini Sahib in the Valhalla of renown. The strain proved too great for the veteran ; he caught a chill in the bitter weather ; and while the Indian wounded waited in hospital on his coming, the news arrived that he was seriously ill. Pleurisy followed, and at eight o'clock on the night of Saturday, the 14th, the end came. It was fitting that the master-gunner should die within sound of his guns, that the most adored of British soldiers should have his passing amid the army he had loved so well. He had given his best to the service of his country, and had forgone his well-earned rest to preach the lessons of wisdom to dull ears. Such a career is a greater inspiration to his fellows than a cycle of victories. *Felix opportunitate mortis*, he died, as he had lived, in harness.

\* " I'll tell you where he beats me, and where he beats the world. He don't care a damn for what the enemy does out of his sight, but it scares me like hell." With this may be joined the verdict of a Wisconsin volunteer : " Ulysses don't scare worth a damn."

Lord Roberts's death synchronized with the passing of the army which he had commanded and done much to create. First Ypres saw the apotheosis of the British regulars, but also their end. That army was now to change its character in welcoming all classes and conditions within its ranks, and growing from a small professional force to the armed strength of a nation. A large part of the old "Contemptibles" was dead, and much of what was left was soon to be distributed through a thousand new battalions. But the memory of the type remained—perhaps the most wonderful fighting man that the world has seen. Officers and men were curiously alike. Below all the difference of birth and education there was a common temperament: a kind of humorous realism about life, a dislike of tall talk, a belief in inherited tradition and historic ritual, a rough-and-ready justness, a deep cheerfulness which was not inconsistent with a surface pessimism. They generally took a dark view of the immediate prospect; therefore they were never seriously depressed. They had an unshakable confidence in the ultimate issue; therefore they never thought it worth while to mention it. They were always slightly puzzled; therefore they could never be completely at a loss: for the man who insists on having the next stage neatly outlined before he starts will be unnerved if he cannot see his way; whereas others will drive on cheerfully into the mist, because they have been there before, and know that on the farther side there is clear sky. They and their kind had made Britain a nation, and had won for her a great empire; they now perished joyfully in the gate that the work of their fathers might endure.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### EBB AND FLOW IN THE EAST.

*7th September—24th December.*

Hindenburg on the Niemen—Battle of Augustovo—The Russian Advance on Cracow—Policy of the Galician Campaign—The First German Advance on Warsaw—The Defences of Cracow and the Fighting in the Carpathian Passes—The Second Advance on Warsaw—The Battle of Lodz—The Battle of the Serbian Kidges.

THE campaign in the East in the autumn and early winter showed a curious ebb and flow, corresponding to the fluctuating strength of the opponents. Russia with her potential millions found it hard to get armies ready for the field, harder to equip them, harder still to move them by her feeble system of communications with the speed and precision which the strategy of the Grand Duke Nicholas required. She was fighting with a clear head but with a lame arm. Germany was in like case. Her hopes of a crowning mercy in the West had been shattered, first at the Marne and then at Ypres, and she was unable to transfer those masses of troops from France which would have given her the power to execute Ludendorff's bold conceptions. She was compelled to struggle on with inadequate forces, which by means of her admirable railways she disposed to the utmost possible advantage. The story of these months is therefore one of rapid Russian advance and of as rapid recoil, when the amorphous forces of the Grand Duke were suddenly stopped by a blow from his more skilful adversary. We see Hindenburg pressing *Rennekampf* beyond the Niemen, and falling back when he had overreached himself; we see Ivanov sweeping towards Cracow, checked, and retiring. Then comes Hindenburg's first advance on Warsaw to save despairing Austria; and his failure, largely because of Austria's failure on his right. Once more Russia moves on Cracow; once more Hindenburg gathers himself together for a second attack on Warsaw, which also fails. Again

he makes the attempt, and again he is held, till by the close of the year the Eastern front reaches a degree of stabilization comparable to what, nearly two months earlier, had occurred in the West.

## I.

The first phase on the Niemen may be briefly dealt with, for it was only a sequel to the opening stage which had ended at Tannenberg. The position in the East in mid-September presented something of a strategic anomaly. The Russian centre was aligned north and south covering Warsaw, but the Russian wings were curiously dislocated. The right wing—Rennenkampf's army—was some hundred miles to the north-east behind the line of the Niemen, while the left wing, which at the moment represented the chief Russian strength, was far in advance of the centre, moving swiftly towards Cracow. Such a situation might have been dangerous but for one fact. The East Prussian campaign was, from the nature of the country, self-contained. Hindenburg was too weak in men, and too busy with Rennenkampf to spare the time for getting behind the Russian centre, and, if he had attempted it, there was the strong fortress line of the Narev to block his way. This enabled the Russian left to pursue the retreating Austrians without any great fear of a movement which should cut them off from their centre. The only danger could come from the German reserves in Posen; but these were still reserves rather than a field army, and until Hindenburg could turn southward the pursuit would go on unchecked. Lemberg had crippled one Austrian army, but Opole, Tomaszów, and Rawa Ruska had all but put Austria out of action. Until from some sanctuary like Cracow she could gain time to organize her reserves, the offensive was beyond her power. The Russian High Command had an acute perception of the advantages of the situation, but they did not overrate them. They knew that Germany would presently come in force to the succour of her ally. Their aim was to lure Hindenburg into an impossible conflict on the Niemen, while their left wing gave the fleeing Austrians no peace, and prevented a rally which should block the way to the Oder. Hindenburg had already committed himself to an advance into the Vilna province. Every day that he could be induced to waste his strength on the line of the Niemen was a gain for the main Russian strategy. He seems to have been of the opinion with which Ségur credits Napoleon,

that the Niemen was not of much use either for offence or defence.

The German commander fell into the trap, but he saved himself before it was too late. Perhaps it was too clumsily baited. It is always hard for a great military Power which has suffered a crushing defeat to play the game of a strategic retirement once it has recovered its strength. The Niemen was made too difficult for the German army of East Prussia. The first serious check awakened the new generalissimo of the East to a sense of his true responsibilities, which in the flush of his Tannenberg victory he had forgotten.

Hindenburg's advance had begun on 7th September. He moved on a wide front, with his left advancing on Kovno from Wirballen along the main Petrograd railway, while a detached force attempted to cross the river Memel. His centre moved towards the Niemen by way of Suwalki, which presently was in his hands; while his right, which was his strongest flank, swept towards Grodno, detaching troops to invest the fortress of Ossovietz, an outlying fort to the north-east of the Narev chain. His army consisted of the four corps with which he had won Tannenberg, and at least two corps of reserves. The country through which he moved was famous as the theatre of Napoleon's first concentration in the campaign of 1812. The distance between the East Prussian frontier and the Niemen is never less than fifty miles, and is one vast tangle of bog and lake and forest. It had changed little since Napoleon's day. Three railway lines pierced it; the roads were few, the chief being a causeway through the marshes from Suwalki by Seyny to various points upon the main highway which runs north to Miriampol from the Niemen crossing at Drusskeniki. In such a country an advance was not unlike that through the passes of a mountain range. Columns and guns and transport moved along narrow defiles on each side of which was impassable country. A bog on the flank is just as much a containing wall for a modern army as an Alpine precipice.

About 15th September Hindenburg had passed the frontier. *Rennenkampf* made no attempt to stay him in the defiles, beyond a little rearguard fighting. Tannenberg had broken his army too grievously, and he could count on no reserves short of the Niemen. One considerable engagement did take place in the Augustovo woods, which was reported in German dispatches as a great victory. On 20th September Hindenburg's right came abreast of Ossovietz and began its investment. The sections of the German army

which had the railways behind them travelled fast, and by the 21st the Niemen had been reached at three points—at Drusskeniki north of Grodno, near Miroslav, and somewhere in the neighbourhood of Kovno. *Rennenkampf* by this time had got most of his men over the stream, which was there a formidable barrier, both from its width and volume of water, to any army. There were some slight delaying actions on the western bank, but by the 25th the whole Russian force was across in prepared positions, and had received large reinforcements from the Vilna command. The battle of the Niemen crossings was mainly an artillery duel. The Russians lay hid in trenches on the low eastern shore, and waited till the Germans had built their pontoon bridges. Then their concealed guns blew them to pieces. Thereupon *Hindenburg* attempted to “prepare” a passage by a bombardment. By the evening of Friday, the 26th, he thought he had achieved his aim, for his guns had boomed all day, and the Russians had made no reply. So on the morning of the 27th he again attempted a crossing, but again his bridges were blown to pieces, with great loss to his troops. He had taken upon himself an impossible task, and his communications did not allow of a rapid bringing up of reserves, even had these reserves been available, or likely in the circumstances to be useful. This was on the German right; but the operations on the centre and left were no more successful, while the siege of *Ossovietz* was proving a farce, since the invaders could not find hard ground for their batteries in the spongy moss which surrounded the knuckle of solid land on which the fort was built.

On the Sunday *Hindenburg* gave the order for the retreat. He realized at last that this East Prussian terrain was self-contained, and that no German advance there would make any difference to the Russian movement towards *Cracow*. He might be kept struggling on the Niemen for a month while the Russians were invading the sacred soil of *Silesia*. The retreat was no easy matter, and the new field-marshal showed all his old skill in marsh warfare. By the Monday he had fallen back behind *Seyny*, on a line running from the *Wirballen-Kovno* railway through *Miriampol* to south-east of the little town of *Augustovo*. The extreme right gave up the attempt on *Ossovietz*, and retired along the railway, while the extreme left had also a railway to move by. Only the centre was in difficulties, for between *Seyny* and *Suwalki* there was nothing but damp woodlands, with one or two narrow causeways through them. *Rennenkampf* made good use of his opportunity. Now was the time to play the traditional Russian game, and harass a



retreating foe whom the wilderness had betrayed. He crossed the Niemen, and attacked strongly with his centre and right wing, while he flung his left well south towards Ossovietz and the little valley of the Bobr. Between Suwalki and the Bobr, and extending to within twenty miles of the Niemen, lay the forest of Augustovo—such a region as that in which Hindenburg had destroyed Samsonov, but far less known than the Masurian Lakes, and destitute of all roads, save swampy forest tracks. Guided by foresters of the district, the Russian left, carrying with them the very flag which Skobelev had borne in the Russo-Turkish war, struggled through the matted woods. Their progress was slow, but by Thursday, 1st October, they were at Augustovo, and had driven out the German occupants. Pushing on, they carried the village of Ratchki with the bayonet, and for a moment it seemed that a large part of Hindenburg's force would be cut off between Suwalki and Seyny.

The German commander escaped disaster by the slenderest margin. For two days there was a fierce rearguard action in the woods, in which the Germans lost heavily in guns and prisoners. But this stand enabled Hindenburg to evacuate Suwalki and get the bulk of his forces across the frontier to the entrenched position which, as at the Aisne, had been prepared beforehand. *Rennenkampf* pressed him along the whole front. On 1st October his cavalry, pursuing the Ossovietz siege-train, were at Grajevo, and next day they were over the frontier and moving on Lyck and Biala. From the 4th onwards the Russian aviators reported a great movement of German columns and transport trains across the border. Hindenburg had received reinforcements from Königsberg, but they were not sufficient to stay a retreat at any point short of the entrenchments on the Masurian Lakes. By 9th October the series of engagements which the Russians called the Battle of Augustovo was over. *Rennenkampf* was now faced with a check such as he had himself given to the enemy on the Niemen—a more formidable check, for a prepared position in marshy and wooded country is, for a modern army, less easy to carry than any river line. But he was not destined to have Hindenburg any longer as his immediate opponent. The time had come for the moving of the German centre to relieve the pressure on Cracow, since it was clear that no invasion of the Niemen would effect this purpose. General von Schubert was appointed to the command of the VIII. Army in East Prussia, and Hindenburg hastened southward.

## II.

Germany in the East was fighting on her defence. She could not hope to strike a decisive blow till victory or stalemate in the West provided her with the weapon. It was otherwise with Russia, which from the start followed an ambitious offensive. For this, one region was clearly marked out beyond others. This was Galicia, which only an artificial line separated from Poland. At first the Russian generalissimo believed that the most that could be done was to drive the Austrians out of eastern Galicia, and invest Jaroslav and Przemysl. But the speedy fall of Lemberg, the victories of Tomasov and Rava Russka, and the apparent demoralization of the Austrian armies convinced him that a bolder strategy was possible. The German centre, with the field-marshal involved in the bogs of the Niemen, was not likely to make a rapid advance. Galicia, which suffered from nearly the worst weather in Europe, had one climatic merit: its short, hot summers and long, hard winters had between them wonderful autumns—autumns of clear, cool skies, when the ground was dry and the rivers low. The Grand Duke Nicholas, knowing what a Russian winter meant for armies in the field, was eager to strike a great blow before it set in. Accordingly, what was always the main Russian plan was accelerated, and the armies swept towards Cracow.

The city of Cracow, the last refuge of Polish independence, was strategically the most important point in Eastern Europe. It stood on the edge of the Carpathians, at a point where the Vistula ceased to be a mountain stream and became a river of the magnitude of the middle Thames. Hills flanked it on north and south, and provided gun positions for its defence. A narrow ring of old fortresses surrounded it, but the main reliance was placed on entrenchments on the outer ring, which were intended to do what the lines at Verdun did, and prevent the enemy's heavy artillery from getting within range. Deep trenches were dug, especially on the northern hills, and light rails laid in them to carry the howitzers. Advanced field-works were also constructed on the Raba, which enters the Vistula twenty-four miles east of the city. In view of the lesson of the Belgian and French fortresses, the defences of Cracow could not be rated as of the strongest. On the south the Carpathian foothills came too near to allow of proper field-works. On the north all the forts and entrenched positions could be dominated by the higher ground which sloped

towards the Russian frontier. Only on the west, on the land between the Vistula and the Rudava, were first-class defensive positions to be found. It seemed likely that any army which allowed itself to be shut up in Cracow would run a certainty of capture, for the Russian attack would be from the east and north. Accordingly the German Staff ordained that the city should be defended by a field army and not by a garrison, and that the Russians should be held at all costs on the Raba.

The map will reveal the high significance of Cracow. It was the gate both of Vienna and Berlin. A hundred miles west of it the great *massif* of the western Carpathians, what is called the High Tatra, breaks down into the plains through which the river March flows to the Danube. These plains, between the Carpathians and the Bohemian mountains, constitute the famous Gap of Moravia, the old highway from Austria to north Germany. Through this gap the army of Kutusov had marched in 1805 to find its doom at Austerlitz. Through this gap ran the great railway which connected Silesia with Vienna, and the general who could master Cracow had a clear and easy road before him to the Austrian capital. Not less was it the key of Germany. Forty miles west from Cracow is the Silesian frontier. Seventy miles from the city lie the upper streams of the Oder. The army which entered Germany by this gate had turned the line of the frontier fortresses of Thorn and Posen, the beautiful system of lateral frontal railways, and the great defensive positions on the Warta. It had before it only Breslau, which till the other day was an open city, and even now had only limited defences, and the old second-class fortress of Glogau. The Oder was a better barrier than was generally believed in the West. Its low banks are easily flooded, and the river in many places strains in mazy channels and backwaters among isles matted with dwarf willows and alders. The good crossings, too, had been for the most part fortified. But the Oder was a defence only against an enemy coming from the east. To an invader from Cracow and the south it offered no difficulties, for he would be on the western bank. He would have turned the line of the Oder as well as the line of the frontier fortresses. If he were strong enough to keep his communications intact and to take or mask Breslau, he would find nothing before him except the little fortress of Kustrin among the marshes at the mouth of the Warta. The strong fort of Stettin at the estuary on the Baltic would be useless against such an invasion. And from Kustrin it was no more than fifty miles to Berlin. The

Russian plan, never for a moment lost sight of though often postponed, was to render useless all the elaborate defences of Thorn and Posen by turning them on the south. Once on the Oder and in the Moravian Gap, she threatened directly the two enemy capitals. And of this position Cracow was the key.

But it meant more than an open road to Berlin and Vienna. It involved an immediate blow at the heart of Germany through one of her chief industrial centres. The advance of the Allies through Alsace would lead at the best only to the wooded hills and rural villages of Baden and Würtemberg, and between the Allies and Westphalia lay the formidable barrier of the lower Rhine. But with the Russians at the gates of Silesia a province not less important than Westphalia was imperilled, and the most vital parts happened to be close to the southern frontier. It was not only that Silesia, like East Prussia, was the home of the great German territorial magnates—the Hohenlohes, Hatzfelds, Plesses, and Donnesmarks. It contained one of the chief coal and iron fields, and one of the largest manufacturing areas of the German Empire. It yielded more than a quarter of the German coal output, it had the richest zinc deposits in the world, and it had enormous chemical and textile factories. The invasion of East Prussia merely dispossessed the farmers and annoyed the squires; the German invasion of Poland had as little effect upon Russia's well-being as the tap of a cane upon the shell of a tortoise. But a closely settled, highly organized industrial land would feel acutely the mere threat of invasion. The delicate machine would go out of gear, and no part of Germany would be exempt from the shock. For on the products of Silesia, scarcely less than on the products of Essen, did the life of her soldiers and civilians depend.

The primary aim, then, of the Russian advance through Galicia was the occupation of Cracow, and with it the roads to Silesia and to Vienna. This was the strategic purpose; but there were two others, which we may call the economic and the political. Germany, with her elaborate system of motor transport, had made petrol one of the foremost munitions of war. She had immense stocks of it, but these stocks were rapidly shrinking. Overseas imports from America were forbidden to her by the British navy. Russia, with her Caspian oil-fields, was her enemy; her supplies could only be kept up by importations from her ally, Austria, and through Austria from neutral Rumania. Now, Austria's oil-fields were all on Galician soil. Early in the sixteenth century the Galician "earth balsam" was known to the world, and since 1878 her



petroleum fields had been busily worked. These fields, some of the richest in Europe, lay along the northern slopes of the Carpathians, and consisted of three chief centres—near Kolomea, which is just outside the northern frontier of the Bukovina; near Krosno, the town on the southern main line between Sanok and Jaslo; and around Drohobycz, which is a little west of Stryj; so soon as Russia controlled the Carpathian foothills she entered into possession of the oil-wells. This in itself would have been sufficient justification for the Galician campaign, and it explains especially Brussilov's persistent cavalry movements along the Carpathian skirts, which had another aim besides seizing the passes. A subsidiary economic purpose would be served by raids into Hungary. With Galicia gone, Rumania was for Germany the only supply ground for petroleum. She was also her chief foreign granary, while from the plains of Hungary was recruited Germany's fast diminishing supply of horses. The lines of this traffic moved too far south to be cut by any incursion from the hills, but Brussilov's advanced cavalry served the purpose of dislocating to some extent the imports by the mere threat of its presence.

The political objects of the Galician campaign may be briefly set down. The great bulk of the people was Slav, who, though not unfairly treated by the Dual Monarchy compared with the other subject races, had yet strong ties of race and tradition with the invading Russians. A second political object was concerned with the occupation of the Carpathian passes. This great range, which swept in a half moon round Hungary from the Iron Gates of the Danube to the Moravian Gap, was not a mountain barrier like the Alps or the Pyrenees. Only in the west does it rise high, and then short of 7,000 feet; all the centre and east of the chain is little over 4,000 feet. Its distinguishing mark is that it is crossed by many passes, all of them much lower than the Brenner. The six main passes from west to east are the Dukla, the Mezö Laborcz, the Lupkow, the Uzsok, the Vereczke, the Beskid, the Wyzkow (Vyshikov), and the Delatyn or Jablonitza. Of these the highest, the Delatyn, is less than 3,000 feet, and the lowest, the Dukla, only 1,500 feet above the sea-level. The Dukla, Mezö Laborcz, Vereczke, and Wyzkow have roads but no railways, while the Lupkow carries the line from Sanok to the Hungarian wine region of Tokay, the Beskid the railway from Lemberg to Munkacs, and the Delatyn the line from Stanislaw to the upper Theiss. By the beginning of October the Russians had crossed the three eastern passes, and were menacing the northern fringe of the Hungarian plains.

Strategically it was for the moment a side-show, justified only by the immense number of light cavalry which Russia had at her disposal. But a serious strategical purpose would come later, for, if Ivanov once reached the Moravian Gap, a flanking advance westward by the south side of the Carpathians would be necessary to protect his left wing. The moment, however, had not arrived for this movement, and Russia's purpose in her Hungarian raids was political. The mountaineers of the Carpathians were a Slav people and friendly; the Hungarians of the plains were bitterly anti-Slav, but they were no less anti-German. Their leaders had been largely responsible for the ultimatum to Serbia which had been the immediate cause of the war, but it was becoming clear that they had raised a conflagration for which they had not bargained. If they found the sacred soil of Hungary threatened they would call upon Austria to defend them, and Austria, it was certain, could not spare a man for the purpose. The Hungarian regiments of the line and the Hungarian Honvéd had suffered desperately at Lemberg and Rava Russka, and were now either shut up in Przemysl or in full retreat towards Cracow. Russia had some understanding of Magyar psychology. She knew that Hungary cared little for the Dual Monarchy, but much for her own position of dominance. She judged that the sight of war at her doors, and the stories of Hungarian regiments sacrificed to Prussian ambitions, and Hungarian officers overridden by Hindenburg's Staff, would go far to weaken her attachment to the Teutonic alliance.

When, after the battles of Opole, Tomaszow, and Rava Russka, the Austrian armies fled westward across the San, there were various changes made in the Russian High Command. Russki was appointed to the command of the centre, which, it was clear, would soon be engaged with the main German advance, and which had now been increased to at least twelve army corps. Ivanov was given command of the southern armies operating in Galicia, with Radko Dmitrieff and Brussilov as his chief lieutenants. Brussilov's business was to act as a flanking force along the Carpathians and in the Bukovina, to seize the chief passes, and to threaten Hungary. To Dmitrieff was assigned the duty of pressing the Austrian retreat, and in especial of reducing the fortresses which had given sanctuary to the remnants of Auffenberg's II. Army.

The two chief fortresses of central Galicia were Jaroslav and Przemysl, both on the river San, and both commanding important railway routes to the west—the first the main line from Lemberg to Cracow, and the second the line which skirts the Carpathians

by Sanok and Sandek, and connects with the lines going south through the passes to Hungary. Thirty years before there had been talk of making Jaroslav the premier fortress, but the fortifications had been left unfinished, and when war broke out they were made into a strong circle of entrenchments. Twenty redoubts had been erected on both banks of the river, for the position was important, both as being on the main railway, and as giving control of the branch line covering the twenty miles to Przemysl, and so offering a base for an assault upon the latter city. Austria looked to Jaroslav for a stout resistance, but something went wrong with the plan. Perhaps the garrison was too small for the size of the line, for the Russian night attacks led to the immediate capture of most of the redoubts. Ivanov appeared before the place on 20th September, and three days later it was in his hands. Dmitrieff had no such easy triumph at Przemysl. On the 22nd he had closed in on it from the south and east, and presently had it completely invested. Its natural position among the foothills of the Carpathians was strong, and it had been equipped as a first-class fortress. Workmen from the surrounding villages had been brought in to strengthen the defences, and a huge quantity of ammunition—most of Auffenberg's reserves—had been accumulated in the place. The danger lay in the scarcity of food, and Dmitrieff, confident in the success of the main Russian advance, and short at the time of heavy siege artillery, resolved to starve the garrison into surrender rather than waste uselessly many lives in an assault. During the last fortnight of September and the first week of October the impending fall of Przemysl was announced daily in France and Britain, and its uncouth name in many odd forms became familiar to the public. But Przemysl declined to fall, and soon its existence was forgotten in the greater operations developing across the Vistula.

Meantime large infantry forces from Ivanov's command had crossed the San. On 26th September the Russians were in Rzeszow, on the main Cracow railway. On the 28th they held Krosno, on the southern railway, and Brussilov had seized the Dukla Pass in the Carpathians, and had penetrated a short distance into Hungary. On the 29th they were at Dembica on the main line, a point only one hundred miles from Cracow. These, however, were cavalry exploits, and the chief force was much farther to the east, for news was already arriving of the beginning of a movement of the German centre. Russki reported German activity between Lowicz and Lodz, and from Thorn along the south bank of the Vistula. Accord-

ingly, within ten days' march of Cracow, the advance was stayed, and Ivanov fell back behind the San to conform with Russki's position in Poland. The curtain was rising on the second act, when battle was to be joined at the very gates of Warsaw.

### III.

The threat to Cracow compelled Germany to act at once. A blow must be struck in relief, and this would best be directed at the enemy's centre. A new army, the IX., was created out of part of the VIII. and reserves from Germany and from the Western front, and by the middle of September Hindenburg was at Breslau, busied with working out the new problem. Already the friction with the Austrian Staff had begun, and it was no easy matter to convince them of the value of the German dispositions. Hindenburg, besides his task of general supervision, was in actual command of the IX. Army, which formed the left and centre of the projected advance. South of it lay a corps of Posen and Silesian Landwehr under Woysch, and on the right Dankl's Austrian I. Army, with the Austrian III. and IV. Armies on the right wing.

About the 5th of October the first news reached the Russian headquarters of a general enemy advance. To Hindenburg one vulnerable point stood out in the amorphous and inorganic mass of Western Russia, and that point was the city of Warsaw. It stood on the wrong side of the Vistula; it was the centre of the scanty railway communications of Poland; it was the capital of the Russian province, a city with a population of three-quarters of a million, and a maelstrom of races, the like of which could not be found in Europe. If he could take Warsaw before the autumn ended, he would have ideal winter quarters; a base pushed far into the enemy's territory from which to advance in the spring; a breach in the fortress which might speedily make it untenable. Even larger schemes rose to the mind of the new field-marshal. If Russia defended Warsaw, and so islanded an army on the western bank of the Vistula, he might cross the river higher up and cut her communications. If that were achieved, instead of a winter of weary struggles among the Polish mud, he would hold the capital city against an enemy who would have suffered a blow so crushing that no recovery could be looked for till the New Year. But, at the worst, a threat against Warsaw would relieve the pressure on the flanks, especially in distracted Galicia. The plan has been



compared with some aptitude to Early's dash on Washington in 1864, which was primarily designed by Lee to shake Grant's hold on Petersburg and Richmond.

To understand what was in Hindenburg's mind, it is necessary to look closely at the nature of the Vistula line. A glance at the map will reveal some peculiarities. From the point at Sandomirz where it receives the San it flows north by east in a well-defined valley flanked by low hills. At Nova Alexandria it bends almost at right angles towards the north-west, and enters the vast, flat, melancholy Polish plain. Thirteen miles on it passes Ivangorod on its right bank—the fortress which was the southern apex of the Polish Triangle. Fifty-seven miles farther and it reaches Warsaw, which lies on the left or western bank, and there it is more than a third of a mile wide. Twenty-six miles on comes the fortress of Novo Georgievsk, on the right bank, and here it turns again and flows west by north towards Thorn and the Baltic. From Sandomirz to Novo Georgievsk the river is everywhere deep and unfordable, and it is bridged only at two points—at Warsaw and at Ivangorod. These were, therefore, vital points for the invaders. Two tributaries of the Vistula are important to remember. The first, the San, runs past Przemysl and Jaroslav and joins the greater river at Sandomirz. In its lower course it is navigable, but as it approaches the hills it becomes a fordable and frequently bridged stream, the crossing of which offers no serious difficulties. The second is the Pilitza, which enters on the west bank between Warsaw and Ivangorod. This is a typical Polish river, about one hundred yards wide, muddy and straining through wide marshes; and it obviously divided any invading force into two quite separate parts. South of the Pilitza again, and south of the town of Radom, lay a great belt of forest country which extended east up to the Vistula bank, and compelled another hiatus in any advance from the west on a broad front. The lines of communication were few and bad at the best, now that the approach of winter was deteriorating the never very creditable Polish roads. On the eastern side of the Vistula the Russians had in the south the excellent main line from Lemberg and Kiev, which crossed the San at Przemysl. North of that for 150 miles they had nothing at all but indifferent country roads till Ivangorod was reached, which was connected by three lines with Lublin, Brest Litovsk, and Warsaw. At Warsaw the main line of Central Europe crossed the river, and branched north to Mlawa and the East Prussian frontier, east to Vilna and Petrograd and to Brest Litovsk, and south to Ivangorod. A rail-

way line, therefore, followed the east bank of the Vistula all the way from Ivangorod to Novo Georgievsk. On the western bank the communications had a fantastic air. Behind the German frontier there lay a network of lateral strategic railways, probably the most perfect system of its kind on earth. But the lines which ran eastwards from the frontier to the Vistula were few. On the south there was a main line from Silesia which ran by Kielce and Radom, and crossed the river at Ivangorod. Midway between Radom and Kielce it sent off a branch to the south-east, which terminated at the town of Ostrovietz, about twenty miles from Josefov, on the Vistula, where the river narrows to a gut between two island-studded reaches. Farther north a line ran from Czestochova by Petrikov and Skierniewice to Warsaw, and was linked up by a cross-country branch with the Ivangorod and Ostrovietz lines. Another line ran from the frontier by Kalisz, Lodz, and Lowicz to Warsaw. Last of all there was an important line from Thorn which followed the left bank of the lower Vistula and reached Warsaw *viâ* Lowicz. Warsaw, as we have seen, lay on the west bank of the river; but its main railway station, the nodal point of the Polish lines, was in the suburb of Praga, across the river. Three bridges connected Praga and Warsaw—the fine Alexander Bridge for foot passengers and ordinary traffic, a road bridge farther south, and the railway bridge, which lay more to the north, under the guns of the Alexander Citadel. That is to say, Russia's reinforcements could be brought up from the east behind the barrier of the Vistula. Until the enemy crossed that river there was no fear of her main or her lateral lines of communication being cut.

Hindenburg's strategy was determined by these simple topographical facts. Only one plan offered a good chance of success. The Austrians advancing from Cracow on the San should compel a Russian retreat behind that stream, and the consequent relief of Przemysl. In the north there should be a flank movement up the Vistula from Thorn, by means of the river and the Thorn-Lowicz railway. The centre should advance by the two main lines Kalisz-Lodz-Lowicz and Czestochova-Petrikov-Skierniewice for a great assault upon Warsaw. But the operative part of the front was the right centre, which should move towards the section of the Vistula between Ivangorod and Sandomirz by the Kielce-Radom railway, and especially by the Ostrovietz branch, while Dankl's Austrian I. Army moved in support along the left bank of the upper Vistula towards Sandomirz. If the crossing of the Vistula was to be won, there was only one place for the effort. This was the narrows at

Josefov. With a railhead at Ostrovietz the Germans had an admirable base for the attempt, and two fair roads led thence to the river. The Russians on the eastern bank would fight at the very place where their communications were worst. Their nearest point on the railway was Lublin, thirty-three miles off, on a bad road, while Ivangorod, by the riverside road, was nearly fifty. Hindenburg's scheme was a general pressure all along the middle Vistula, and a piercing movement at Josefov, where it would be hardest for the Russians to repel an attack in force. Once over the Vistula, he would cut the Kiev railway at Lublin, and, if his attack on Warsaw succeeded, drive the Grand Duke Nicholas in retreat along the northern railways towards Vilna and Petrograd.

It was a well-reasoned plan, which did credit to the victor of Tannenberg. But, unfortunately for him, the Russian generalissimo, as soon as his cavalry had brought news of the great movement from the German frontier, divined his intentions. The Grand Duke played for safety, and he played the game well after the traditional Russian manner. He resolved to risk nothing on the plains west of the Vistula, where he would have to rely for supplies on divergent railway lines, and where the broad and muddy Pilitza would cut his army in two. Let the enemy have the benefit of the peculiar awkwardness of western Poland for autumn campaigning. Leaving a screen of light horse west of the river to keep in touch with the invaders, he gave the order for all the Russian forces to retire behind the Vistula and the San. This meant that Ivanov, pushing on by Tarnow to Cracow, had to fall back fully fifty miles to conform with the alignment of the centre. The Grand Duke held in force the bridgehead at Ivangorod, and was getting ready a field army for the defence of Warsaw. He did not propose to give Hindenburg the chance of bringing the Skoda howitzers against the capital. He would meet him well to the west on a line of entrenchments, and, when the attack had broken itself there, would counter-attack with his right and drive the German left down upon the Pilitza. Meanwhile he had his eye upon Ostrovietz and Josefov. If the attempt at crossing failed, if the Russians crossed and counter-attacked, the German right centre would have an awkward forest country in which to retreat.

In Russia they told a tale of an ingenious counter-plot. Poles were captured in the German advance, who, in terror of their lives, gave all the information they could about the Russian preparations. The Grand Duke, they said, had no large force in front of Warsaw, and he did not mean to defend it. He intended to give up the line



of the Vistula, and to fall back upon Brest Litovsk and the valley of the Bug. Presently authentic German spies brought back the same tale, and in a little German aviators reported a movement of troop-trains from Warsaw and Ivangorod towards the Bug. The Russian generalissimo left nothing to chance, and he succeeded in completely misleading his adversary. On 10th October Hindenburg's centre was at Lodz, that great manufacturing town built up by German capital; his left was farther east on the Thorn railway, and his right was between Petrikov and Kielce. Dankl was on the left bank of the Vistula, near Sandomirz, and the Austrian right wing had reached Tarnow. Except at Warsaw, the Russian infantry were east of the Vistula and the San, and one last desperate effort was being made to reduce Przemyśl before it should be relieved. Four days later the German left was at Plock, on the Vistula, the centre east of Lowicz nearing Warsaw, and the right between Radom and Ostroviets. The movement of the left endangered a small Russian advance which had been made from the line of the Narev towards the East Prussian frontier. The Russians fell back, and Schubert's right wing followed, and took Mława. Had the Germans been in any great strength they might have seriously endangered the Grand Duke's right. Next day, the 15th, the battle was joined all along the line of the Vistula.

The German advance was slow and deliberate, more like the occupation of a territory already won than an attack against an unbroken enemy. As they progressed they made roads, excellent roads, which were destined to have only a life of a few weeks. Great stretches of forest were cut down, and the felled trunks used to make corduroy paths over the marshes for the guns. In the worst places artillery causeways were built, soon to be blown to pieces. Actually the gauge of the Kalisz-Lodz-Warsaw railway was altered, many miles being completed each day. These preparations not only gave Hindenburg a chance of bringing up his supplies by motor transport from the subsidiary rail heads, but provided, so far as his centre was concerned, a safe and speedy means of retreat. Russian airplanes, out from Ivangorod in these days, reported great activity east of Ostroviets. It was the German right centre improving the woodland roads from the railway to the narrows of the Vistula.

Meanwhile in Warsaw there was an equal busyness. The first intimation of the coming of war was the appearance of German dirigibles and airplanes above the city, which dropped bombs, chiefly in the direction of Praga and the great railway station.



Presently came showers of leaflets, some directed to the Poles, promising Polish autonomy; some to the Russian rank and file, asking them why they fought in a war engineered by the aristocracy. Democratic appeals were varied by religious. One pamphlet, aimed at Polish Catholic sentiment, bore on its cover a coloured picture of the Virgin and Child, flanked by medallions of the Pope and the Kaiser, that versatile believer who elsewhere was being represented as a convert to Islam. Warsaw, with its mixed population and its enormous number of Jews, was a difficult place to govern with the enemy at its gates. The press was most strictly censored, and elaborate precautions had to be taken to prevent espionage. Very soon the terror of the air-craft passed away, though something like panic appeared again when German cavalry entered the villa district of Prushkov, about eight miles from the centre of the city, and the well-to-do residents fled into Russia, many not stopping till they had reached Moscow. But Warsaw soon settled down. All through the great battle at its gates the city went on with its ordinary avocations, and only the sight of an occasional German airplane, the Siberian regiments and the Japanese heavy guns moving over the Alexander Bridge, the daily return of wounded, and the western sky lit at night by fires other than the sunset, told the citizens that war was only a few miles distant.

The bid for Warsaw by a part of the IX. Army under Mackensen began on Friday, the 16th, and continued till the evening of Sunday, the 18th. The brunt of the Russian resistance fell on the Siberian corps, who had just arrived by rail from Moscow. The Grand Duke was also much assisted by the batteries of heavy guns served by Japanese gunners, which Japan had sent by the Siberian railway. For the first day the issue hung in the balance; on Saturday and Sunday the Russians had established an unshakable trench position a few miles beyond the outer forts, and by Monday the attack had died away. The reason was soon apparent. The Grand Duke had swung round his right across the Vistula under cover of the guns of Novo Georgievsk, and was driving in the German left centre, while the Austrians on the right were in equal danger of outflanking.

Rennenkampf, relieved from anxiety about the East Prussian front by the formation of the new Russian Tenth Army, was able to strike the German left flank in the neighbourhood of the Bzura, and compel it to a defensive orientation of east and west. The battle was now resolved into two separate actions—that of Macken-

sen to the north, and that of Dankl and the Austrians to the south, of the Pilitza. The attempt to cross the Vistula had been vigorously pushed on. One effort was made in the section between Ivangorod and Warsaw; but since the Russians had a railway line on the eastern bank, they were able to bring up their guns and blow the German rafts and pontoons to pieces. But this was in the nature of a feint, and the real effort was made, as the Russian Staff expected, from Ostrovietz as a base at the narrows of Josefov. A strong assault was made on the bridgehead at Ivangorod by a corps from Radom, to cover the movement which was going on farther south. The Russians appeared to hold the eastern shore weakly at Josefov, and part of Dankl's force, including several batteries, crossed in pontoons. They saw no sign of the enemy, and moved joyfully towards the Ivangorod-Lublin railway, confident that they had turned the left of the Russian centre. But on 21st October Russki fell upon them at a village called Kazimirjev, eight miles south of Nova Alexandria. It is a district of low hills rising above swampy flats, and the wearied invaders found themselves suddenly opposed to a Russian bayonet charge. Few escaped over the Vistula. Next day the Russians were across the river at Nova Alexandria, and, having established gun positions on the high bank, prepared to advance along the whole line. The following day they landed advance parties of Caucasian troops north of Ivangorod opposite Kozienice, and these held their ground most gallantly till the river could be bridged. So began the battle south of the Pilitza, the fiercest part of the great engagement, the chief fighting taking place near the village of Glovaczov, on the river Radomka. The Russians drove the enemy from the open country beside the river into the great woods of spruce, ten miles deep, which make a screen between the Vistula and the Polish plain. Among the trees there were a thousand separate engagements, desperate hand-to-hand fighting in the cranberry mosses and forest glades. Ultimately they forced the Germans into the open on the west side, where their guns completed the destruction.

In the forest region south of Radom the glades and paths were well known to the Russian guides, and there were many surprises of German detachments. The Russians, now across the Vistula with all their army, gave the retreating foe no rest. The Germans fought desperately, struggling, often at great cost of life, to save their guns or to render them useless to the enemy. By the 25th they were at Radom, and the pursuit was moving so fast that it got between them and the Pilitza. The next stand was at

Kielce ; but after an engagement lasting a day and a night, the Russians, on 3rd November, drove them from the town, along the southern railway, with a loss of many prisoners and guns. By the beginning of November the long German front had been broken into two pieces, with the Pilitza between—the southern retreating south-west towards Czestochova and Cracow, the northern retiring westward towards the line of the Warta. The victory in the south determined the issue north of the Pilitza. On the 18th Mackensen was in retreat ; on the 25th the general retirement was ordered. Grojec and Skierniewice were taken, and then Lowicz and Lodz ; for, with both flanks turned, there could be no resting-place for Hindenburg short of the frontier.

In this fortnight's battle the only modified success won by Teutonic arms fell to the share of the Austrians. The troops of the Dual Monarchy had met with grim disaster in the first two months of war, and they had beyond doubt been badly led ; but some were of excellent quality, and now they gave exhibition of it. The two reconstituted armies from Cracow swept eastward to the San. Ivanov was in chief command here, but the resistance was mainly in the hands of Radko Dmitrieff, while Brussilov watched the Carpathian passes and protected the communications with Lemberg. The Austrians were successful till Hindenburg's *débâcle* in the north uncovered their left flank and compelled them to retire. Their communications were good, and the forested banks of the San gave them a strong base for defence. They crossed the San at several points, reoccupied Jaroslav, and relieved Przemysl. From the south they delivered a fierce attack on the Russian left at Sambor, and nearly succeeded, their object being the recapture of Lemberg. The garrison of Przemysl, under General von Kusmanek, were very near starvation, and welcomed their deliverers. Food and supplies of all kinds were rushed up from Cracow to the fortress, and Przemysl was given a new lease of life. It had need of it, for in a day or two the iron cordon was closed again. Jaroslav was retaken by the Russians, along with 5,000 prisoners, and Przemysl was re-invested. Finally, Dankl managed to cling to Sandomirz long after there was no German within forty miles of the Vistula, and only retired south of the upper Vistula when the Russian left centre threatened to envelop him.

As Hindenburg retreated he left a desert behind him. The roads he had laboriously made were mined and destroyed, as was the new gauge of the Kalisz-Lodz railway. He "chess-boarded" the ordinary highways, and blew up railway stations, water-towers,

and bridges. It looked as if the Germans had said farewell for good to Poland, for no army could advance through a wilderness, where its communications would be as easy as were those of Crassus in the Parthian desert. But Hindenburg was no aimless vandal. The frontal assault had failed, and he was now to revert to the far sounder strategy of Tannenberg. Had a Russian staff officer been free about the beginning of November to travel over the whole of western Poland, he would have observed that the destruction, wholesale in the south, gradually grew less complete towards the north, and practically ceased on the left bank of the lower Vistula. There the roads were as good, or as bad, as usual, and though here and there a railway bridge had been demolished, enough had been left to reconstruct it quickly. The German commander was maturing a scheme which depended upon a devastated Poland, *all except the northern quarter.*

The position was a grave one for Berlin. Austria was no nearer safety than before; the dash on Warsaw had failed, and the desperate venture of West Flanders was failing. It was not yet possible to get reinforcements in any great strength, though a number of wearied units were due presently from the West. But something must be done at once, or the Russians would be in Cracow—nay, in Posen. Since 1st November Hindenburg was commander-in-chief in the East, and the command of the IX. Army was handed over to Mackensen. He and Ludendorff saw in the enemy's success a weak point which might enable them, even with their inadequate forces, to deal a crushing blow, and as the early days of November passed they observed to their relief that the Grand Duke was likely to play into their hands.

Most disasters in war have been due to successes pushed too far along the line of least resistance. Samsonov hurried on gaily towards Graudenz, and was annihilated at Tannenberg. Hindenburg, with Vilna as a bait, advanced to the Niemen, was thrown back, and suffered heavily at Augustovo. After Rava Russka there was no misadventure in Poland, for the Russian centre wisely clung to the Vistula; but Hindenburg's assault on Warsaw failed decisively, and his retreat was attended by serious losses. It was now Russia's turn to make a premature advance in the centre and to pay for it, as, three months later, she paid for the same movement in East Prussia. Her strategic position was bad, for she had before her that awkward salient of west Poland—itsself now a desert so far as communications went, but lined on north and west by a perfect system of strategic railways. She was faced with the



problem either of surrendering the wedge to the enemy or of occupying it and placing herself in imminent danger of a flank attack and a battle fought on lines parallel with her communications. In all likelihood the Grand Duke would have left west Poland alone but for the lure of Cracow in the south-west. In Galicia he had an excellent railway to move by, and Cracow was an objective of such supreme importance that to seize it any risk might be justified. The Galician autumn weather had not yet changed to winter snows, and there was still time for a dash against it and the line of the Oder. We must believe that the Russian General Staff were well aware of the dangers of Polish campaigning, though they had not divined all that was in Hindenburg's mind. But they realized that, if Cracow was to be won by a Galician advance, an army must move also through Poland on its right flank, and they hoped to keep Hindenburg busy in defending the Posen frontier, while Dmitrieff dealt with the great fortress. They believed—as every one at the time believed in Western Europe—that the Germans had a line of positions prepared on the Warta where they would make a stand. Accordingly, while the main advance was Dmitrieff's on the left wing, the whole centre and right were moved west of the line Kutno-Lodz—the Pilitza.

In front went a cavalry screen, travelling fast, and covering the slow infantry movements along the damaged Polish roads. By 9th November, on the extreme right centre, Cossacks were at Nieszawa, on the Vistula, not twenty miles from Thorn. On the same day they were at Kolo, on the right bank of the lower Warta, and next day the vanguard crossed the Posen frontier and cut the railway at Pleschen, on the Cracow-Posen line. This reconnaissance, apparently, did not tell the Grand Duke Hindenburg's main secret—the comparatively good condition in which the northern Polish communications had been kept; but it convinced him that the Germans did not propose to make a general stand on the Warta. The forces which had been beaten north of the Pilitza were retiring behind the frontier, on the line Kalisz-Thorn. Farther south the case was different. The troops which had been driven from Radom and Kielce were, apparently, entrenching themselves along the upper Warta between Wielun and Czestochova, while Dankl's Austrian I. Army was falling back north of the Vistula in the same direction. This news suggested to the Russian generalissimo an improvement on his first plan. While his left assaulted Cracow and turned the line of the Oder, if he struck strongly with his centre along the Warta he might roll up the left flank of the German

southern forces, and hem them in between Russki and Dmitrieff. Accordingly there was a general hastening of the advance all along the Russian line. Strong assaults were made on the German front in the Masurian Lakes, probably to prevent reinforcements being sent to the German centre; the Russian right centre pressed forward towards Kolo and Kalisz, the left centre bore down upon the lines of Czestochova, and the race for Cracow was accelerated. It was believed that even if the movement down the Warta failed, the Russian centre could hold the enemy, and prevent his interfering with the main Russian objective, the flanking movement upon Cracow and Silesia. The Russians were resolved at almost any cost to treat western Galicia, like East Prussia, as a self-contained terrain, and to refrain from weakening Dmitrieff whatever might happen on their centre. Long after Hindenburg's counter-offensive in the north had thrust back Russki and Rennenkampf, the Russian left was still moving on Cracow, and it was not checked until the German-Austrian armies undertook a specific counterstroke on their right wing.

By the 12th of November Russian cavalry on the north bank of the upper Vistula had crossed the Nida and Nidzitsa, and had taken Miechov on the German frontier, not twenty miles north of Cracow itself. Dmitrieff's main forces were still eighty miles to the east, while Brussilov was systematically reoccupying the main passes of the western Carpathians, and about this date was securing the Dukla. For the next three weeks Dmitrieff's advance went on slowly but steadily. The only heavy fighting was on his extreme right across the Vistula, where he came into contact with the right of Dankl's army from Czestochova. By the end of the first week in December his cavalry were in the suburbs of Cracow at Wielitza, and his main force was on the line of the river Raba. He was now about twelve miles from the fortress; and it seemed as if next day the investment would begin, for his right was closing in from the direction of Miechov, and the northern side of Cracow was the hardest to defend.

As we have seen, during the first Russian advance in September the fortifications of Cracow had been overhauled, and it was now as strong as its nature permitted. The big Skoda guns had been got into position, and much entrenching had been done in a wide circle around the city. The main Austrian forces were not in the *enceinte*. They had been moved north to the line Wielun-Czestochova, and during the last week of November the place was held by a garrison rather than a field army. Hindenburg waited till

the menace was very near before he took measures of defence, for he clung to the belief that Cracow could be saved at Lodz and Lowicz. But by 5th December it was clear that Russia could not be thus distracted, and a plan for the salvation of the city was hastily matured. Two forces took the field for the purpose. One, under Boehm-Ermolli, moving from the south-west of Cracow among the foothills of the Carpathians, struck directly at Ivanov's left. The other, under Boroevitch von Bojna, operating from the plain of Hungary, aimed at driving Brussilov from the passes, and so threatening the Russian rear and their lines of communications. They struck simultaneously, and Dmitrieff was scarcely called on to face the menace on his flank when he heard of Brussilov being heavily engaged in the mountains.

On 8th December Dmitrieff fought a battle almost on the outskirts of Cracow. But for the threat in his rear he might have held his ground, for the action on the whole went in favour of the Russians. But two factors combined to make his position undesirable, apart from what was happening to Brussilov. His right across the Vistula was being strongly attacked from the direction of Czestochova, and on his left bodies of the enemy were working their way through the higher glens of the mountains, and descending the Donajetz valley to threaten his left rear. Accordingly he fell back to a line running from Novo Sandek, on the Donajetz, north-west across the Vistula to a point on the river Nidzitsa. On the 12th grave news reached him. The second Austrian army had carried the Dukla Pass, and the Dukla, though it had no railway, was the key of the western Carpathians. It is ten miles across, broad and easy, and perfectly suited even in winter weather for the passage of great armies. Whoever held it had turned all the eastern passes against an invader from north or south. Its capture by the Austrians meant that large forces could at once be poured down upon the Galician plains, and the Russian army would be cut off between them and the enemy advancing from Cracow. To avoid that danger Dmitrieff fell back again. He was compelled to shorten his line, and his right was, therefore, retired from the Nidzitsa to behind the Nida. His front now ran from just east of the Nida across the Vistula, up, but well east of, the lower Donajetz, up and east of its tributary the Biala, past Tarnow, and thence by Jaslo to the Carpathian spurs south-east of Krosno. This meant that the debouchment from the Dukla Pass was now in front of his line.

To observers in the West at the time the news of the retirement

was disquieting, but in reality it meant little except a check to the Cracow advance. Unless the Russian left were pushed north of Jaroslav, their main communications, the Lemberg railway, would not be threatened. Przemysl, which was fifty miles from the mouths of the passes, might indeed be relieved, and it was the danger to Przemysl that was the main Russian preoccupation. As had happened before its relief in October, a vigorous bombardment was undertaken, but without effect. By this time the numbers of the investing force had been seriously curtailed. Presently came news that the Austrians had occupied the crest of the Lupkow Pass in Dmitrieff's rear, and were fighting hard for the Uzsok Pass, which carried the railway from the Hungarian plains to Lemberg. But by this time the Russian retreat had reached its farthest point, new troops had been brought from Kiev, and the hour had come for a counter-attack. About 20th December the advance began. The enemy was driven from the eastern bank of the Nida, across the lower Donajetz, across the Biala, while the Russian left, swinging south-west from Krosno, seized the foot of the Dukla Pass, and succeeded in cutting off and capturing a considerable Austrian force. Brussilov meantime undertook operations against the Lupkow and Uzsok, and by Christmas Day the Galician approaches to all the three great western passes were in Russian hands. About the same time the mountains were visited by violent snowstorms, and the weather further safeguarded the Russian flank. Even across low passes no great army dared move in a Carpathian blizzard.

#### IV.

On 11th November Mackensen moved with his IX. Army, and about the 13th the Grand Duke first realized that Hindenburg was preparing a counterstroke. The German advance was on a comparatively narrow front, the forty miles between the Warta and the lower Vistula; though the extreme left was to operate against Plock, on the right bank of the latter stream. Hindenburg's objective was once again Warsaw, to be secured by a sudden blow at the right of the Russian centre. He argued, with justice, that, with broken railways and ruined roads, that centre could not be quickly reinforced or easily retire. If it were destroyed, he would be in Warsaw long before Ivanov, who commanded the left centre moving against the upper Warta, could come up



from the south, and the fall of Warsaw would send Dmitrieff back post-haste to the east. The Russian position was a bad one, except on the assumption that the invader had been finally broken. Against an unbeaten and reinforced foe their line offered a dozen points of weakness. With forces which cannot be estimated at more than two millions they were holding a front of nearly a thousand miles. From the lower Niemen down through the Masurian Lakes their line ran along the south frontier of East Prussia by Mlawa to a point between Plock and Thorn on the Vistula, then southward by Kolo and Sieradz to east of Czestochova, striking the upper Vistula near the Nidzitsa, and continuing by Tarnow to the Carpathians; then along the crest of the mountains to the Bukovina and the Rumanian frontier. From Masurenland to Plock their communications were poor; from Plock to the Nidzitsa they were the worst conceivable. Against Hindenburg's sudden thrust it may be doubted if the Russian right centre had more than 200,000 men. The only hope of aid was from behind Warsaw, and the Kutno-Lowicz lines were still in disrepair. Help from the left centre must come by the Czestochova-Petrikov line, and that had been most diligently destroyed in the German retreat.

In late autumn in Poland there come heavy mists which cover the landscape like a garment. From sunrise to sunset they never break, and the traveller's vision is limited to a hundred yards of sodden plain. Air reconnaissance is hopeless, and even light cavalry give poor results, for an enemy's strength, even when felt, can only be guessed at. In such weather the bolt was launched against the Russian right centre. The Russian Staff, who had been for some days aware of movements north of the Vistula, about the 13th of November realized that something was happening on the southern bank. Aided by the railway from Thorn, a strong force was pressing in the Russian outposts, and Russki promptly contracted his far-stretched front. Ivanov was eighty miles away, facing the entrenched position of the German southern force from Wielun to Czestochova, and between the two halves of the battlefield lay fifty miles of unoccupied country. With a large force of cavalry guarding his left flank, the Russian general took up a line from the Vistula near Gombin to Uniejov on the Warta, and waited to ascertain the enemy's strength.

He was not left long in doubt. The attack came in irresistible force, and the much inferior Russian army slowly gave way. By the 15th Russki had been driven back on Kutno, and his

line ran from the Vistula through Leczyca, and well east of Uniejov. Reinforcements had been summoned from behind Warsaw, but in the nature of things they could not arrive for several days, and no immediate help could be looked for from Ivanov. Many prisoners and guns were lost in the retirement, for the lines of retreat were few and bad. In any other army the losses would have been greater, but the Russians had a practice of marching not in solid columns but in scattered groups, which seemed to straggle indefinitely, but appeared with wonderful precision at the appointed bivouac. The cavalry did great service as a rearguard, and the orange and scarlet sheepskin coats of the Turcomans, mounted on their incomparable horses, gleamed through the mist on both flanks. The Russian aim was to fall back in good order behind the river Bzura, which flows from south of Kutno east to Lowicz, and then north to the Vistula. On the 18th the Germans were in Leczyca and Orlov, in the curve of the upper Bzura, controlling the roads to Lodz and Lowicz. Russki retired his whole left across the Bzura from Lodz for some forty miles westward. His right still clung to the Vistula in the neighbourhood of Ilov. The Bzura at this point is a stream about the size of the Thames, running partly between high corroded banks in a channel eaten out of the plain, and partly in open reaches with a deep fringe of bog. There were no bridges left, but in its upper course, where it bends southward, there were many fords. West of Lowicz for some forty miles runs east and west a great belt of marshes, partly on the Bzura, and partly west of it towards Leczyca. There were crossing-places in these marshes, many of them, for the country people had to find ways of movement, but for the most part they were small paths wholly unfitted for the movement of armies and impossible for guns. About Leczyca there were, indeed, several better passages, and almost in the centre of the belt, between the towns of Kutno and Piontek, there was one famous causeway, engineered for heavy transport. Twenty miles south of the marshes lay the large industrial city of Lodz, which was the first German objective. To break down the Russian position three courses were possible—a flanking movement on the north by Ilov; a flanking movement on the south by Leczyca, where the crossings were easier; and a frontal attack which should force the Piontek causeway. Mackensen at different times adopted all three.

The Bzura was a strong line of defence, but it had the serious drawback that it could be turned on the south. The Russian

left rested on no natural obstacle, no deep river or mountain range, but was in the air in that stretch of no man's land around the upper Warta. Had Ivanov, farther south, been able to move rapidly, a German flanking movement might have been caught between hammer and anvil. But Hindenburg knew well how thorough had been his campaign of destruction, especially on the Czestochova-Petrikov-Lodz railway, and had no fear for his own enveloping right wing. Perhaps he remembered the lesson of the Polish insurrection of 1831, when Russia's aim was Warsaw. Then the advance from east of the Vistula made no progress, and Pashkevitch in the summer resolved upon an assault from the west. In July he marched by the north bank of the Vistula to the Prussian frontier at Thorn, where he crossed the river, and advanced on Warsaw by the south bank. The Poles, under Skryznecki, held the east side of the Bzura with an army of 30,000; but, leaving Pahlen to attack in front, Pashkevitch turned their flank by the upper Bzura, and drove them back upon Warsaw. A month later the capital surrendered.

Time was the essence of Hindenburg's plan, for he knew that, unless Lodz and Warsaw fell to him soon, the Russians could get up reserves by their trans-Vistula railways. He must strike finally while their force was small and much embarrassed by his first blow. Accordingly he pressed hard with his right from Leczyca, and won the western crossings of the marshes. At the same time his extreme left moved towards Plock, on the north bank of the Vistula, and a force from East Prussia, attacking from Soldau, drove back the Russians south of Mlawa. He was clamouring for more troops and getting them promptly. The southern group at Czestochova was ordered to advance to keep Ivanov's hands full, and to prevent any of the nearer reinforcements reaching Russki, until he should have been thoroughly beaten, and the way opened towards Warsaw. Meanwhile the main effort was on Mackensen's centre against the causeway of Piontek.

What followed was tactically one of the most extraordinary incidents of the whole campaign. At first the Russians beat off the attack on the causeway, and held the German army among the villages north of the marshes. But on the 19th a desperate effort of Mackensen's centre pushed across and drove the enemy well south of Piontek. Over the causeway for four succeeding days troops were rushed in huge quantities, and the Russian line fell back and back, till there was a deep sag in it east of Lodz and south of Strykov. Against that sag Mackensen on Monday, the

23rd, put forth all his strength. The Russian front broke, and the Russian right centre was split into two parts—one lying east of Brezin and Koluschky, across the Bzura at Lowicz and so to the Vistula, and the other surrounding Lodz on east, north, and west, running from Rzgov by Zgierz to Szadek, on the upper Warta. The ragged edges of the gap were Rzgov and Koluschky. It was a most perilous predicament, for at the same moment the Germans were bringing strong bodies up from Lask on the Kalisz-Lodz line, while the Wielun-Czestochova army was threatening Petrikov on the south. This meant that the Russian left around Lodz was assailed on front, flank, and rear—from Leczyca, from Lask, and from east of Rzgov—while the Russian right was apparently powerless to aid. For a moment it looked as if Hindenburg had succeeded beyond his wildest dreams.

Suddenly at the supreme crisis the Russians were reinforced. From the directions of Skierniewice and Petrikov troops arrived from the Second and Fifth Armies. These fresh forces were flung into the battle, and succeeded in cutting off the apex of the German wedge, and re-establishing the Russian line. This was on the 23rd, and no help was ever more timely. Another day, and the Russian left would have been beyond human aid. The point of the German wedge was destroyed. It cannot have been more than a division, probably less, and, whatever it was, it disappeared from the campaign. But a singular situation remained. The German wedge had consisted of two corps, the 20th and the 25th Reserve—together with Richthofen's cavalry—and two-thirds remained in a kind of *sac*, making a deep bulge in the Russian line. Russki exerted himself desperately to close the mouth of the *sac*, and he almost succeeded. Petrograd believed that a unique Russian victory was preparing, and for two days from Zgierz to Rzgov, and from Strykov to Koluschky, the sides of the pocket pressed in on the trapped German corps. More troops were needed, and these were summoned from the extreme Russian right under Rennenkampf. But for some reason still obscure Rennenkampf was a day late. He was promptly dismissed, and replaced in the command of the Eighth Army by General Litvinov.

Mackensen took the only possible course. He brought up reserves and broadened the mouth of the pocket, pushing back the flanking Russians at Strykov and Zgierz. In the frantic struggle, which lasted during the 24th and 25th, the Germans lost terribly. Companies were reduced to a fifth of their strength, whole battalions were so broken that they had to leave the fighting



line and yield place to the new troops which Mackensen poured into the *sac*. The severest fighting was at night, but during two days there was no cessation, the Germans battling for freedom and the Russians for victory. By the 26th the remnants of the two corps had got out of the pocket at Strykov, and for a moment there was a respite to the carnage.

But the fresh troops which Germany had brought up were not allowed to remain long on the defensive. When an army is in difficulties its staff falls back upon their favourite strategical device—the device which has given them the best results in recent fighting. With memories of Tannenberg and Mons behind them, the Germans naturally thought kindly of the enveloping movement. Reinforcements were still arriving for Hindenburg, and he ordered Mackensen to fling his strength against the Lowicz-Lodz front, while with his right wing he drove back the Russian left towards Petrikov. The Russian northern front at this moment ran from Ilov, in the north, crossing the Bzura west of Lowicz, and continuing by Strykov and Zgierz to a point near Szadek, on the upper Warta. In the crook formed by its left wing lay the city of Lodz. Lodz, the second of Polish cities, was the industrial capital of the country, the Manchester of Poland, with large textile factories and machine shops. It contained a population of half a million, of which 40 per cent. were German immigrants, since the factories were mostly German-owned, and nearly a quarter were Jews. Such a place in rear of the Russian lines was a post of danger, a rendezvous for spies; and, moreover, to hold it meant that the Russian front bent forward in an ugly salient. Had a retreat become necessary there, the seven miles of the Lodz streets would have made it slow and difficult. Lodz in the East played much the same part as Ypres in the Western campaign. It was the foundation of a salient, the relic of an unsuccessful offensive. More cautious than the Western commanders, the Russian generalissimo determined to shorten the line and avoid the angle. Accordingly when, on the 27th, there was a frontal attack on his centre, and a heavy movement against his left, he deliberately relinquished the city. The withdrawal was slow, and lasted more than a week. On 5th December, shells were falling in the streets, and several of the great hotels were damaged. On Sunday, 6th December, the Germans entered Lodz without opposition, and were welcomed by their numerous compatriots. The Russian front now stretched in an almost straight line from just west of Petrikov to the Bzura, west of Lowicz, and thence to Ilov and the Vistula.

Hindenburg now concentrated his forces for a blow at Warsaw, and for this purpose struck at the apparently weak Russian right wing. This wing, as we have seen, was north of the Bzura and west of Lowicz. Against it Hindenburg hurled his left, which was admirably served by the Thorn-Lowicz railway. At the same time, he attempted a movement which, had it succeeded, would have been fatal to the whole Russian position. The East Prussian force, which for the past three weeks had been pressing down from Mława, was reinforced, and a serious effort was made to cut the main railway line between Warsaw and Petrograd. Advancing on a sixteen-mile front, this new force occupied the highroad which ran from Przasnysz to the railway south of Mława. There, however, it was checked and decisively beaten by a Russian advance from Novo Georgievsk. It was driven north of Mława almost to the East Prussian frontier, and for the moment the Russian right flank was secure. The movement against the Russian wing just south of the Vistula was more successful. When it began, the Russian cavalry were in Gombin, and the infantry held Iłow in force. The German pressure convinced the Grand Duke that his present front had serious weaknesses. It lay awkwardly astride the Bzura, like M'Clellan on the Chickahominy, and in the south it gave bad entrenching positions and worse communications. In all the country from Lowicz to the Kielce-Ivangorod railway there was no easy access to the east. Accordingly he resolved to retire his left wing down the Pilitza to its navigable waters, by which transport could come from Warsaw, and in the north to get behind the Bzura and its tributary the Rawka. The weather confirmed his decision. The winter frosts still tarried, and no more than a thin coating of ice lay on the Polish bogs. The Vistula and the Pilitza were open for river traffic. Early in December came a spell of complete thaw, which water-logged the whole countryside. Let the German offensive break itself against a strong defensive position, and lose its ardour in the bottomless mud.

What we may call the Second Battle of Warsaw raged for the better part of three weeks, from 7th December to Christmas Eve. It was fought on the German side not for any indirect object like the relief of Cracow, but for the definite possession of Warsaw itself. For the first fortnight the Russians fell back slowly all along their line. By the 15th Iłow was untenable; by the 17th Petrikov was taken. By the 18th the Russian line had been formed from the Vistula along the east bank of the Bzura, up the

east bank of its tributary the Rawka, through the hilly country south of Rava to Inovolodz on the Pilitza, across the railway line at Opoczno, and thence by the Nida to the Vistula. This involved the surrender of towns like Lowicz, Petrikov, and Tomasov, but it gave a position which in a Polish winter was probably the best which could be found, both for natural strength and communications. It had always been in the mind of the Russian Staff, and had been carefully worked out in every detail; but there is reason to believe that at first it was regarded as a place only for a temporary stand, and that the real Russian defence was to be on what was called the "Blonie line," through the town of that name eighteen miles west of Warsaw. It was only when the strength of the Bzura-Opoczno line revealed itself that it became for the Russians what the line Arras-Nieuport was for the Allies in the West.

The situation in the East now corresponded exactly with the position in the West. The Russians entrenched themselves on a front against which the enemy's assault broke in vain.\* As in Flanders, the severest fighting was in the north, and along the line of a little river. The Bzura and the Rawka were, indeed, very different from the canalized Yser. The first-named flows through a level plain, broken up with great patches of fir woods, in which stand the white Polish country houses. It is a shallow muddy stream, fifty yards wide, and in its lower course easily forded, for there are no adjacent marshes. On the east bank there is a gentle slope inland; on the west side there is in some places, about a hundred yards from the water, a sharp bank, marking the rim of an old channel. The Russian trenches were dug close to the stream, the Germans for the most part a little retired beyond the small escarpment. The Russians had here for their communications the unfrozen Vistula and the two lines from Warsaw to Sochaczew and to Lowicz. Farther south they had the Pilitza and the Kielce-Radom railway. The Germans attacked the lines of the little rivers between the 19th and the 25th, their main efforts being against Sochaczew on the Bzura and Bolimov on the Rawka. At night columns in close formation would crash through the cat-ice along the shore, wade the stream which ran breast-high, and, in spite of heavy losses, make good the farther bank. Sometimes they took an advanced Russian trench, sometimes they fell by the river's edge, but in no case did many return. The

\* They were supplied in December with barbed wire—the first they had used in the campaign.—GOURKO, *Russia in 1914-1917*, p. 72.

German attack on Warsaw was pressed with indomitable vigour, for Hindenburg desired the Polish capital as a Christmas gift for his Emperor. But no valour on earth could carry that line. Warsaw was only thirty-five miles off, and the citizens heard daily and nightly the clamour of the guns. They might have slept as peacefully as if they had been a thousand miles away, for a barrier is a barrier, at whatever distance it stands from the object of desire. By Christmas Eve the German attack ebbed and died, as it had ebbed six weeks earlier before Ypres. The winter stalemate, long delayed in the East, had at last arrived.

## V.

We turn to the heroic war which Serbia, ringed round with enemies and suspicious neutrals, short of ammunition, supplies, and everything but valour, was waging in the tangle of hills between the Drina and the Morava. At the battles of Shabatz and the Jadar the Austrian army had been heavily defeated, and by 24th August there were few Austrians left on the Serbian side of the Drina and the Save. Vienna announced that the campaign had been merely a punitive expedition, which had achieved its purpose, and that for the present her hands were full with weightier matters in the north; on which it may be observed that the casualties of the punitive force were nearly 40,000—eight thousand of whom were dead—and that it lost some fifty guns. Serbia had now to face a question of some difficulty. The enemy was gone, but he would presently return. The wedge of her territory, bounded by the Drina and the Save, jutted awkwardly into the Dual Monarchy, and offered an intricate problem of defence. Her forces were insufficient to maintain the whole of the long border line, and the nature of her internal communications did not allow of rapid movement. Accordingly she decided that the wisest defence was an offensive aimed against the Bosnian capital of Serajevo. If that city were won there was every chance of a rising among the Bosnian Slavs, which would keep Austria busy. Accordingly, along with Montenegro, the invasion of Bosnia was resumed, and on 14th September the important frontier post of Vishegrad, which they had approached in August, was at length taken. Meantime the Austrian forces north of the Danube continued their bombardment of Belgrade. To put an end to this annoyance, rather than as a part of a serious advance, a Serbian detachment



crossed the Save in the darkness of the night of 6th September, silenced the hostile batteries, and took the Syrmian town of Semlin. These activities, especially the threat against Bosnia, drove the Austrians to a fresh offensive, and during the first half of September there was much inconclusive fighting on the line of the Drina. October saw Serbia entrenched along the river, along the heights of Jagodnia and Gouchevo, through Lesnitza to Racha, and thence along the Save to Mitrovitza and Obrenovatz—a line of nearly one hundred miles, and utterly beyond the power of her small army to hold. Her hope was in the marching speed of her men—the soldiers who two years before had made the famous winter march across Albania to Durazzo. With such troops she might be able quickly to reinforce a threatened point.

The third great Austrian offensive matured towards the end of October. It was inevitable for a dozen reasons. The German activity in Poland and the appearance of new German corps enabled Austria to turn her attention to her enemy in the south-east. The punishment of Serbia, which had been nominally the reason of the war, was eagerly demanded by the Austrian people, indignant at two humiliating defeats. Further, on 30th October, Sir Louis Mallet at Constantinople had asked for his passports, and Turkey had entered into the struggle. If Serbia could be crushed and Bulgaria conciliated, a junction might be effected with the Ottoman armies which would keep Rumania quiescent, and, more important, would open up to the Teutonic Powers a new way to the sea. In estimating the motives of Austria, and those of Germany behind her, a chief place must be given to that old hankering for an Ægean outlet which had for a decade dominated their Balkan policy.

To understand the campaign which followed we must observe the configuration of Serbia. On the west and north-west it is bounded by the Drina and the Save. For thirty miles along the right bank of the lower Drina there is something approaching a plain, which becomes wider as it nears the Save, and extends along the right bank of that river to the Danube. It is never very broad, and it is much broken up with ridges, but it is possible manœuvring ground for modern armies. For the rest, the country is a knot of hills, which descend steeply upon the upper Drina, and stretch eastward to the Bulgarian frontier, where they join the main Balkan range. They are broken up into many subsidiary systems which it is needless to particularize; but one main ridge runs from the Drina in a semicircle south of Valjevo, where

it forms a watershed between the river Kolubara, which enters the Save at Obrenovatz, and the Western Morava, which flows from the Albanian border to the Great Morava. The principal river is the Great Morava, running through eastern Serbia from south to north. The railways are determined by the river valleys. The trunk line to Constantinople runs up the Morava by Nish to the Bulgarian frontier. Kragujevatz, the Serbian arsenal, is on a branch line to the west of the Morava valley. One line runs south from Obrenovatz up the Kolubara to Valjevo, and another from Valjevo to the main trunk line, while from one of the stations on this latter branch a short railway goes south up the valley of the Lig.

The Austrian objective was Nish, whither the Serbian Court had retired, and the main line to Bulgaria. But before these could be reached there were various secondary objectives. The obvious route to Nish was by an advance up the Morava from Semendria on the Danube, but to this there were two insuperable objections. The first was the Morava valley, which at two places contracts to narrows, where the ground falls steeply and forms a strong natural defence. The second was the lateral valleys entering the Morava from the west, which would enable a Serbian force from the central hills to strike at the flank of any Austrian advance. It was clearly the path of wisdom to occupy the central knot of hills, and especially the upper valley of the Western Morava. With these in their control, they could advance to Nish with an easy mind, for their communications would be safe. The first objective was therefore Valjevo on the Kolubara, the terminus of two railways and the starting-point for the passes of the horse-shoe range to the south, which was the way to the Western Morava. The second was Kragujevatz, the Serbian arsenal, and a point from which the main Morava route could be seriously menaced.

The Austrian forces under General Potiorek concentrated for the movement reached a total of some 265 infantry battalions, with a full complement of artillery. Against this great army Serbia could not bring forward equal numbers. Though she called every peasant from the plough and every shepherd from the hills, her total force did not exceed a quarter of a million; and of infantry she had only some 200 weak battalions. Her army, indeed, was largely composed of veterans—the men of Kumanovo and Monastir and the Bregalnitsa. But her supplies, especially of ammunition, were terribly depleted, and the arsenal at Kragujevatz was all but empty. She was shut off from the outer world, for the

one port by which ammunition could enter was the Montenegrin Antivari, and only pack ponies could travel the hill roads that led to it. The great port of Salonika was free for Serbian goods, but to bring in munitions of war by that channel involved a breach of Greek neutrality. But the Serbian army, for all its difficulties, was in good heart, for it had already three victories to its credit, and it had implicit faith in its generals. The Commander-in-Chief, as in the wars with Turkey and Bulgaria, was the young Crown Prince Alexander, and his Chief of Staff was Field-Marshal Putnik, a very able, irascible old gentleman, who knew every detail in the topography of his native land, and had a great eye for efficient subordinates. One of these, Mishitch, who was presently to command the First Army, was to win one of the foremost reputations of the war.

Before the wide sweep of the Austrian advance from Save and Danube and Drina, the Crown Prince had no choice but to fall back and look for his help to the hills. For a little he clung to the foothills of the Tser range and a line running east to the Kolubara, but he was too weak to hold it. Had he attempted to defend Valjevo and the low country he would have been outflanked by the movement from Semendria on the east and Liubovia on the west. The Austrian advance began in the first week of November, and by the 10th they held the whole Kolubara valley up to Valjevo, the main trunk railway up to Mladenovatz, and were pushing on the west towards Ushitza, on the head-waters of the Western Morava. The Crown Prince fell back to the summit of the range south of Valjevo which forms the watershed. The main road from Valjevo to Tchatchak in the Western Morava valley (with a branch leading from Milanovatz to Kragujevatz) crosses a pass about 2,000 feet high, which divides the range into two *massifs*. That on the west is called Maljen, and rises to a little over 3,000 feet; that on the east is called variously Suvobor and Rudnik, and is some 500 feet higher and more precipitous. By the middle of November the whole Serbian army was on these ridges, while their left held the spurs running south to the Western Morava to resist the turning movement of the Bosnian corps from Ushitza. They covered Kragujevatz and Tchatchak, and their line of retreat was open down the Western Morava towards Nish, save in the unlikely event of the Austrian left making its way up the Great Morava.

Then followed an unaccountable delay. For a fortnight the Austrians lay in Valjevo and along the skirts of the hills, and did nothing. Apparently Potiorek regarded the precipitate retreat of

the Serbians into the mountains as the end of their serious resistance. He was aware of their scarcity of ammunition, and believed that it could not be remedied. So confident was he of success that he deliberately weakened his army. By the beginning of December the great Austro-German counter-offensive from Cracow was maturing, and he sent three of his corps to assist in the attack from the south against the Carpathian passes. During that fortnight the Serbians had not been idle. King Peter, enfeebled by illness, had left his capital as the Austrians advanced, and joined the army on the ridges. Every man that could be brought up was added to the strength, and with heroic efforts gun positions were created on the rocky spurs. Most important of all, fresh supplies of ammunition for artillery and small arms had arrived at last by devious ways from the Western Allies, in spite of attempts by Turkish and Bulgarian bands to wreck the convoys.

On the 1st of December the Austrians had initiated their major strategy, which was to sweep south-eastward with powerful wings, from Mladenovatz on the left and from Ushitza on the right, and enclose the Serbian army. Their centre was advancing against the ridges, with its left moving up the Lig valley, where ran a single-line railway, against the Serbian right on the Rudnik range, and its right moving up the head-waters of the Kolubara against the Maljen range. On the next day they were well up on the slopes of the hills, and by the 3rd they had gained the western ridge of Rudnik. The Serbians lay along the ridges, with the First Army under Mishitch on the left, then the Third Army under General Yourishitch Stürm, and on the right the Second Army under Field-Marshal Stepanovitch.

On the afternoon of the 3rd the moment came for the Serbians to strike. It was a crisis of their national history, graver than any they had yet met, and the whole army was inspired with a profound seriousness. King Peter, old, deaf, and sick, rose to the great occasion, and addressed his men almost in the words of Shakespeare's King Harry before Agincourt, or of Robert Bruce before Bannockburn :—

“Heroes,” he said, “you have taken two oaths—one to me, your king, and the other to your country. I am an old, broken man, on the edge of the grave, and I release you from your oath to me. From your other oath no one can release you. If you feel you cannot go on, go to your homes, and I pledge my word that after the war, if we come out of it, nothing shall happen to you. But I and my sons stay here.”



This noble appeal had its effect. Not a man left the ranks. The calculated atrocities of Austria in September—calculated, for we possess the Imperial and Royal instructions on the subject—had made the war a crusade. The weary and ragged troops went into battle with a new passion of sacrifice.

The ridges of Rudnik and Maljen are barren even in midsummer, wide screes and sharp ridges of shale descending to stony glens. No heavy snow had yet fallen, but a powdering of white lay on the rocks. During the night of the 3rd and throughout the 4th the whole Serbian right and centre were heavily engaged, while the left at Ushitza fought a separate battle of its own. The gun positions had been skilfully selected, and the Serbian infantry charged with fury and hurled the enemy from the slopes. Some time during the 5th the Austrian left centre broke and streamed northwards down the Lig valley. Presently came the turn of the centre, which was forced off Maljen along the Valjevo road. That same night the Serbian left at Ushitza won a great victory over the Austrian 15th and 16th Corps, driving them north across the western passes of Maljen towards the springs of the Kolubara. At dawn on the 6th the Austrian line had everywhere given way. It was not in retreat; it was routed and broken till it had no longer the semblance of an army.

The Serbians were as vigorous in pursuit as in battle. By the 7th their front was Ushitza-Valjevo-Lazarevatz. The enemy fled by the roads from Valjevo to Shabatz and Obrenovatz, where they had a clear path for retreat; but their right, which was in the Maljen and Powljen hills, came out no more. The extreme left attempted a stand on the Kosmaj ridges and at Lissovitch, but after some hard fighting was driven back by Stepanovitch upon Belgrade. The Austrians could not halt short of their own frontier. The Serbian left swept up the Drina and beyond. The centre pushed towards the Save, picking up prisoners and guns with every mile. The right moved swiftly towards Belgrade, and with it went the king. On the 15th the capital was retaken, and while the Austrian rearguard was fighting in the northern suburbs, King Peter was on his knees in the cathedral giving thanks for victory. A mere remnant of an army straggled over the Save, while the Serbian guns rained shells on its crossing.

The victory was of a type not unknown to history—a well-equipped army inveigled into a country where it could be caught at a disadvantage by a weaker force operating under familiar conditions. Of the 200,000 Austrians who crossed the Drina and the

Save, 1 of 100,000 returned. The disaster was indeed for Austria what Tannenberg was for Russia: it virtually destroyed a field army. Potiorek was removed from his command, and all talk of the conquest of Serbia by Austria alone died away. The little Balkan state had done inestimable service to the Allied cause, for it had put four corps out of action, and delayed for some weeks the Austrian main offensive against eastern Galicia. Two of the most decisive battles in the first six months of war were triumphs respectively for age and youth. Tannenberg was won by a veteran nearing seventy, and the Serbian Ridges by a young gentleman of twenty-six.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC AND IN AFRICA.

*10th August—8th December.*

Germany's Loss of her Pacific Colonies—Fall of Tsing-tau—Germany in Africa—Conquest of Togoland—Beginning of the Cameroons Campaign—Skirmishing in German South-West Africa—Maritz's Revolt—The Situation in German East Africa—British Failure at Tanga—The South African Rebellion.

#### I.

By the end of August the war had spread beyond Europe to every quarter of the globe where Germany possessed a square mile of territory. Britain's Australasian and African dominions were engaged in defending or enlarging their borders, and, though the fighting was on a small scale compared with the gigantic European struggle, it had important strategical bearings, and for Britain was scarcely less vital than the battlefields of France. The oversea German dominions were so widely scattered that they could get little aid from their fatherland or from one another. Each had to fight its battle alone, with such resources as the outbreak of war found in its possession.

In the Pacific, Germany owned 100,000 square miles of territory, mainly in New Guinea. Her possessions there, officially known as Kaiser Wilhelm's Land, were in the northern part of the south-eastern section of the island. A long straight line running south-east and north-west divided them from Papua or British New Guinea, while another straight line, running north and south, separated them from the Dutch colony in the west. Kaiser Wilhelm's Land had an area of 70,000 square miles, and a population of half a million, three hundred of whom were Germans. The country had been little developed, but exported from its chief ports, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen and Constantinhafen, a fair amount of copra, cocoa, and rubber. The German protectorate of New Guinea included not only Kaiser Wilhelm's Land, but a large number of islands

lying off its coast, and its official headquarters were at Rabaul, on the island of New Pomerania. Chief among these islands was the group known as the Bismarck Archipelago, which lay to the north-east of Kaiser Wilhelm's Land, and included New Pomerania, New Mecklenburg, New Lauenburg, New Hanover, Admiralty Island, and two hundred little isles. Their population consisted of some 200,000 natives, and a few hundred Chinamen and Germans. The chief island was New Pomerania, with its two considerable ports of Herbertshohe and Simpsonhafen. A little to the east lay the Solomon Islands, that archipelago of high wooded mountains and cannibal tribes which Germany shared with Britain, owning the two chief western islands, Bougainville and Buka. North of New Guinea, but still forming part of the protectorate, were three groups midway between Australia and Japan—the Carolines, the Pelew, and the Marianne or Ladrone Islands. They had been bought from Spain in 1889, and consisted of some six hundred coral reefs, divided into an eastern and a western group for the purposes of administration, and yielding little but copra. Detached to the east lay the Marshall Islands, twenty-four in number, whose chief product was phosphates. Germany's remaining possession in the South Seas was Samoa, and the tale of her doings there may be read in Stevenson's *A Footnote to History*. The group consisted of the two large islands, Savaii and Upolu, with Apia, the chief port, on the latter. Some 500 Europeans, chiefly British and German, resided there, about 1,500 Chinese, and a dwindling native population of about 15,000. From Samoa came copra in large quantities, and of late a fair amount of rubber. Lastly, far to the north on the China coast, in the province of Shantung, lay the important German possession of Kiao-chau, the history of whose acquisition has already been told in these pages. It was a district some 200 square miles in extent, situated on a sheltered bay, and surrounded by a neutral zone. The town of Tsing-tau was a naval station, and most of its 5,000 German inhabitants were marines. The place was strongly fortified both by land and sea—Germany had spent £20,000,000 on it—and was connected by rail with the Chinese lines. Its importance was due to its contiguity to the Japanese Port Arthur and the British Wei-hai-wei, and to the excellence of its harbour, which made it an ideal base for the German Pacific Squadron.

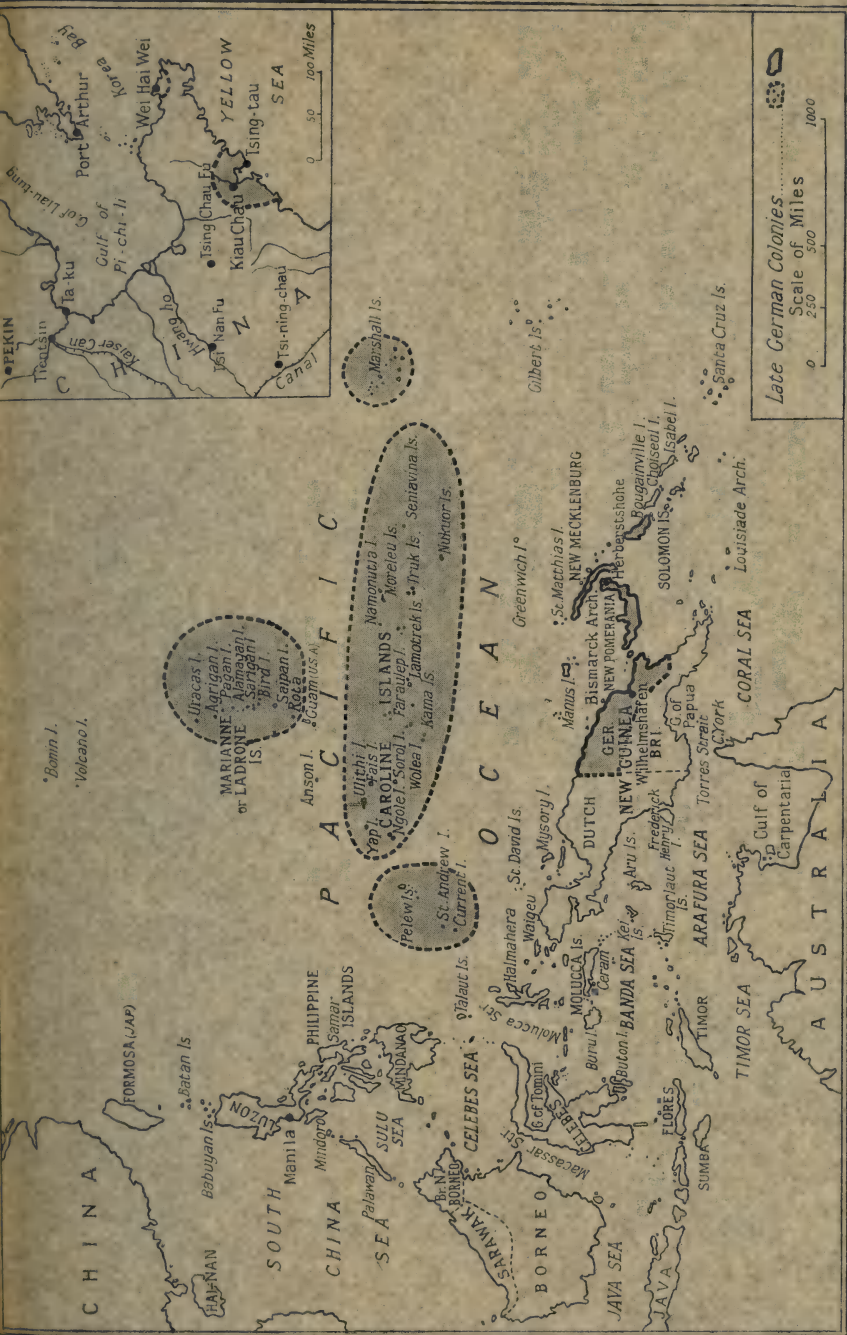
The German Pacific possessions had long been a source of anxiety to the Australian Commonwealth, and the first blow against them was struck by the adjacent British dominions. The initial



attack was made on Samoa. On 15th August a New Zealand expeditionary force, some 1,500 strong, left Wellington in troopships, and sailed for Samoa under the escort of H.M.S. *Australia*, H.M.S. *Melbourne*, and the French cruiser *Montcalm*. On 28th August it reached Apia, and took possession of the islands without resistance. The German officials came in and swore fealty, and were confirmed in their posts. Then came the turn of New Pomerania, which had already been reconnoitred. On 11th September an expeditionary force arrived at Herbertshohe, the port at the north-eastern extremity of the island. A party of sailors landed at dawn, and proceeded through the bush towards the wireless station. The advance was not unopposed, for the Germans seem to have concentrated here most of the troops which they possessed in their New Guinea Protectorate. In several places the road was mined, while rifle-pits had been dug along the edge, and snipers placed in the neighbouring trees. The sailors fought their way for six miles to the wireless station, where the German defence surrendered. Our casualties were ten officers and four seamen, and the whole German force fell into our hands. At the same time the ports of Herbertshohe and Simpsonhafen, and the capital, Rabaul, were occupied without trouble. Two days later our troops sailed for the Solomon Islands, and secured without difficulty the surrender of Bougainville. They then turned their attention to Kaiser Wilhelm's Land, where they expected a more serious opposition. But again they won a bloodless victory. The British flag was hoisted in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, and a garrison left behind. The Australian navy had done its work with admirable precision and dispatch, covering great distances in a very short time. H.M.S. *Melbourne*, for example, sailed 11,000 miles in the first six weeks of war. At the end of September one or two small islands were still nominally German, but for all serious purposes the Emperor's dominions in the Pacific had disappeared. The important German wireless stations at Yap (Caroline Islands), Namu (Gilbert Islands), and Rabaul (New Pomerania) had been destroyed. Early in October the Japanese occupied the Marshall Islands and the other northern groups, which they handed over to Australia.

The German Pacific Squadron, based on Kiao-chau, did not attempt to defend the Pacific islands. The bulk of it, under Admiral von Spee, sailed for the western shores of South America, with what consequences we shall presently learn. Two smaller cruisers, the *Emden* and the *Königsberg*, betook themselves to the

Indian Ocean, and, as we have already recorded, did considerable damage to our commerce. The *Königsberg*, after her easy destruction of the *Pegasus* in Zanzibar roads, gave little more trouble, and proved unable to play the part allotted to her in the attack on Mombasa. Her end came about 10th November, when she was found by H.M.S. *Chatham* hiding in shoal water about six miles up the Rufigi River. Here she was sealed up to be disposed of at our leisure, the fairway being blocked by sunken colliers. The *Emden* had also a short life, but, in the language of the turf, she had a good run for her money. We last saw her off the Malabar coast of India on the last day of September. Then she turned south-eastward, and captured five merchantmen in the Indian Ocean, of which she sank four and sent one into Colombo. She was next heard of off the north end of Sumatra, where our cruisers captured her collier and her attendant steamer. The loss of her colliers made her task difficult, but it did not weaken her boldness. On 30th October she entered the roadstead of Penang, flying a neutral flag and rigging up a dummy funnel, with the result that she succeeded in torpedoing a Russian cruiser and a French destroyer. Once more this new "Flying Dutchman" vanished, but her course was near its end. On 9th November she appeared off the Cocos (or Keeling) Islands with the intention of destroying the wireless station and cutting the cable. A wireless message was, however, dispatched, which was picked up by the cruiser *Sydney* of the Australian navy about fifty miles to the east. This message, which was much mutilated, ran, "Strange warship off entrance," and the presence of the *Emden* was at once conjectured. The *Sydney* sighted the feathery cocoanut trees on the Keeling Islands about 9.15 a.m. on the 9th, and shortly after saw the top of the *Emden's* funnels. She was lying off Direction Island, where she had landed a party to destroy the cable station. The *Emden* opened fire at long range, and then steered a northerly course, fighting all the while a running battle with the *Sydney*. One hour and forty minutes later she ran ashore on North Keeling Island, a burning wreck, with her funnels shot away and her decks a shambles. It was an unequal contest. The *Sydney's* 6-inch guns had an easy mastery over the 4.1-inch guns of the *Emden*, and while the latter had 230 killed and wounded, the former had only 18 casualties. Captain Karl von Müller was captured and his sword returned to him, for he had proved a gallant enemy. He had treated the crews of his captures with generosity, and no charge of brutality was ever brought against him. The *Emden* was an



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**GERMANY'S PACIFIC COLONIES.**

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expensive ship to our commerce. In two months she captured seventeen merchantmen, which made up about half the total loss to that date of our mercantile marine. One way and another she cost us rather more than the price of a Dreadnought. In her short life she did far more damage proportionately than the *Alabama*, which destroyed about sixty-eight ships, valued at some three millions sterling, but took two years to do it, as against the *Emden's* two months. On the other hand, it should be said that the *Emden* was more than three times the size of the Confederate privateer.

We turn to the chief episode in the Eastern Seas, the siege and capture of the fortress of Tsing-tau, the only German fortress to be carried in the war. On 15th August Japan delivered an ultimatum to Germany, in order, as she put it, to safeguard general interests as contemplated in the agreement of alliance between herself and Great Britain. She asked for (1) an immediate withdrawal from Japanese and Chinese waters of all German armed vessels, and (2) the delivery at a date not later than 15th September of the leased territory of Kiao-chau, in order that it might be restored to China. The wheel had come full circle. After the war with China, Germany had interposed to rob Japan of the fruits of her victory, and, on the plea of murdered missionaries, had forced from China the Kiao-chau lease. Now the tables were turned on the aggressor. Japan required an answer by noon on 23rd August, and, not receiving it, promptly declared war, and proceeded to the investment of the Tsing-tau peninsula.

Japan entered upon the war at the request of Britain, who, as the Japanese Parliament was informed, asked her to free their joint commerce from the German menace in Eastern waters. Her army was largely modelled on the German; it was from German instructors that she had learned that art of war which had given her the Manchurian victory; and there was much in the German military temperament with which she sympathized. At the outbreak of war the best opinion in Japan believed that Germany would win, but she saw clearly that the victory of Germany spelt ruin to her national ambitions, and was resolved to play the wiser and bolder game. Her policy was dictated by self-interest, for she did not share the idealism of the Western Allies, but it was self-interest in the highest degree enlightened. She had now twice the military and naval power which she had had when she began the war with Russia. This is not the place to enlarge on her armed strength; suffice it to say that she had an army with a

peace strength of 250,000, which in war would be increased to 1,000,000; she had made a speciality of artillery, especially the heavier guns; her navy comprised six Dreadnoughts, six other battleships, four first-class battle cruisers, and large classes of cruisers, destroyers, and coast-defence ships. In tonnage her fleet was nearly double the size of that which she had possessed at the date of the Treaty of Portsmouth. For the assault of Tsing-tau she organized a special siege force, under the command of Lieutenant-General Kamio. It embraced a division of infantry and three additional brigades, a corps of siege artillery, a flying detachment, and detachments of engineers and marine artillery. A squadron from her fleet, under Vice-Admiral Kato, which was assisted by several British warships belonging to the China station, co-operated by sea.

The Tsing-tau fortress stood near the end of the Tsing-tau peninsula, which formed the eastern containing shore of Kiaochau Bay. To the north-east of the town were a number of low heights—Bismarck Hill, Moltke Hill, Iltis Hill—which the Germans had heavily fortified. Beyond the peninsula lay marshy coastland, much liable to flooding, through which the railway ran west to the town of Kiaochau, within the German sphere of influence, but outside the leased territory. The German governor, Admiral Meyer Waldeck, and his garrison of 5,000 were bidden by the Emperor to defend the fortress as long as breath remained in their bodies. The German squadron, under Admiral von Spee, had, as we have seen, very properly sailed away, for a besieged harbour is not the place for a fleet in being; but several of the smaller warships remained behind.

On 27th August the Japanese took the first step by occupying as a base some of the small islands which cluster around the mouth of the harbour. From these they instituted a series of mine-sweeping operations: a wise precaution, for the Germans had relied much upon that peril of the seas. So thorough was the Japanese work that only one vessel of their fleet was mined during the siege. On 2nd September they landed troops at the northern base of the peninsula, their object being to cut off the fortress by a movement against it from the mainland. But the autumn rains, very heavy in Shantung, put a bar to this enterprise. All the rivers, which descended from the hills, rose in high flood, and spread out in lagoons over the coastlands. General Kamio had to content himself with sending airplanes over the fortress, which dropped bombs successfully on the wireless station, the electric-power

station, and on the ships in the harbour, and with an assault upon the railway station of Kiao-chau, at the head of the bay, which he took on 13th September. He was then some twenty-two miles from Tsing-tau itself, and had the railway line to aid his advance. By the 27th he had reached the chief of the outer defences of the place, Prince Heinrich Hill, and next day captured it without serious opposition. This gave him a gun position from which he could dominate all the inner forts, much as the fall of the trans-Nethe forts gave the Germans command over the inner lines of Antwerp.

On the 23rd, a small British force arrived from Wei-hai-wei, under Brigadier-General Barnardiston, who commanded the British troops in North China. It landed at Laoshan Bay, on the seaward side of the peninsula, and, having only a short way to march, joined hands with the Japanese on 28th September, just after the capture of Prince Heinrich Hill. Since the floods were now falling, advance was easier, and the invaders were soon only five miles from Tsing-tau, and had drawn the cordon tight across the peninsula. German warships in the bay attempted to bombard the Japanese right, but were driven off by Japanese airplanes, which showed extraordinary boldness and skill during the whole operations. Meanwhile a vigorous bombardment was going on from the Japanese squadron lying in the mouth of the harbour, and on 30th September a German counter-attack both by sea and land was quickly beaten off. Slowly General Kamio was coming to the conclusion that the enemy either did not mean to obey their Emperor and fight to the last breath, or had very doubtful fighting ability. They were enormously wasteful of shells, which did not look as if they contemplated a long resistance. The Japanese general was convinced that a fierce assault was more desirable than a slow investment. But first he gave the non-combatants in Tsing-tau a chance to leave, and on 15th October a party of women and children and a number of Chinese were conducted through the Japanese lines.

General Kamio had now his big guns in position, and the bombardment began in earnest. He had practically no field artillery, but he had a heavy siege train of 140 guns, including six 11-inch howitzers and a large number of 6-inch and 8-inch pieces. The Germans seem to have had nothing larger than 8-inch. The first general bombardment was from the sea, when considerable damage was done to the forts on Kaiser Hill and Iltis Hill. On the 31st of October, the birthday of the Emperor of Japan, the

first land bombardment began. On that day most of the inner forts were silenced, and, as at Antwerp, the skies were black with the smoke of burning oil-tanks. On 1st November, H.M.S. *Triangle* silenced the forts on Bismarck Hill, and presently only one fort, Huichuan, was left in action. Next day the Austrian vessel, *Kaiserin Elizabeth*, was sunk in the harbour, and the floating dock disappeared, having probably been blown up by the defenders. Meantime the army was pushing its way down the peninsula, driving back the German infantry, and making large captures of guns and prisoners. By the night of 6th November the Allies were through the inner forts, with their trenches up to the edge of the last redoubts, and the outworks to east and west were taken during the night. Early on the morning of the 7th the hour had come for the final attack in mass. But that attack was never delivered. At six o'clock white flags fluttered from the central forts and from the tower of the Observatory. That day representatives of the two armies met, and at 7.30 in the evening Admiral Meyer Waldeck signed the terms of capitulation. At ten on the morning of the 10th, the Germans formally transferred Tsing-tau to General Kamio, and Germany's much-debated foothold on the continent of Asia had gone. The German casualties were heavy, and the survivors, nearly 3,000 in number, were sent as prisoners to Japan, Admiral Meyer Waldeck and his Staff being allowed to retain their swords. The Japanese losses were about 6 per cent., and the British less than 5 per cent. In addition, Japan lost one third-class cruiser, one third-class destroyer, a torpedo boat, and three mine-sweepers.

The capture of Tsing-tau seventy-six days after the declaration of war, and little more than a month after the investment was complete, came as a surprise to Japan, who had made preparations for a struggle till Christmas, and to Germany, who had not realized that the fate which had befallen Namur and Maubeuge would, under similar circumstances, befall her own fortresses. General Kamio handled the expedition with perfect judgment, and provided brilliantly for co-operation between the sea and land forces. It was an achievement of which Japan might well be proud, for it was to her armies that Tsing-tau yielded, since, though the British contingent had done well, it was only one-fourteenth of the investing force. The German defence was not brilliant; though the place possessed an armament equal in range and superior in number of pieces to that of the besiegers, it capitulated after a shorter bombardment than that of the French or Belgian for-



tresses. When General Barnardiston reached Tokio, he was given a popular reception, such as had never in the history of Japan been accorded to any stranger. It was the one moment in the campaign when Japan felt something of the enthusiasm of brotherhood in arms, and her ordinary citizens remembered the ties which bound them to the other great island people of the world.

## II.

The scene now changes to Africa, where Germany possessed four colonies contiguous to those of France and Britain. Her colonial ambitions had awakened with her great development after her victory over France in 1870. She desired to emulate Britain in finding an outlet under her flag for her surplus population, which had hitherto emigrated to North and South America; she wished to have producing grounds of her own from which she could draw raw material for her new factories; she sought to share in the glory of conquest and colonization, which had done so much for France and Britain; and, as a coming maritime Power, she was anxious to have something for her Navy to defend. Her thinkers as well as her statesmen fostered the new interest. List and Friedel and Treitschke pointed out that trade followed the flag, and that the flag might also follow trade; while Bismarck discerned in the movement a chance of getting fresh assets to bargain with in that European game which he played with such consummate skill. Especially Germany's eyes turned towards Africa, and not without justification. Her travellers had been among the greatest pioneers of that mysterious continent. In the history of South African exploration honourable place must be given to the names of Kolbe and Lichtenstein, Mohr and Mauch. In West and Northern Africa the roll of honour contained such great adventurers as Hornemann and Barth, Ziegler and Schweinfurth, Rohlfs and Nachtigal. It was a German, Karl von der Decken, who first surveyed Kilimanjaro, and the story of African enterprise contains few more heroic figures than that of von Wissmann. Germany was resolved to share in what has been called the scramble for Africa, and she had admirable pathfinders in her missionaries and explorers.

This is not the place to describe in detail the tortuous events from 1880 onwards which led to the foundation of the four German African colonies. It is a fascinating tale, for Germany made

adroit use of the suspicions and supineness of the Powers in possession. So far as the British Governments of the day were concerned, she might have had all she wanted for the asking; and it was only by the efforts of clear-sighted private citizens that her bolder schemes were checkmated. Her first attempts were directed towards the Portuguese colony of Delagoa Bay, which would bring her in touch with what she believed to be the bitterly anti-British people of the Transvaal. In Pondoland and at St. Lucia Bay, on the Zululand coast, she endeavoured to get grants of land from the native chiefs, and was only stopped by a tardy British intervention, forced upon the mother-country by the people of Cape Colony. Few at home realized the significance of the attempts, and Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons publicly thanked God for them, and looked forward to an alliance, "in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind." In 1884 the work was fairly begun. Sir Bartle Frere from Cape Town had warned Lord Carnarvon as early as 1878 that Britain must be mistress up to the Portuguese frontier on both the east and west coasts. "There is no escaping from the responsibility," he wrote, "which has been already incurred ever since the English flag was planted on the castle here. All our difficulties have arisen, and still arise, from attempting to evade or shift this responsibility." But presently Herr Luderitz had founded his settlement at Luderitz Bay, and on April 25, 1884, the German flag was hoisted in Damaraland, and the colony of German South-West Africa was constituted. Two months later Nachtigal landed from a gunboat at Lome, the port of Togoland, and by arrangement with the local chiefs declared the country a German protectorate. A month after he did the same thing in the Cameroons, and the British consul, sent to frustrate him, arrived five days too late.

Bismarck, desiring to regularize his acquisitions, summoned the famous Berlin Conference, which met on 15th November of the same year. Many of its phrases are still in common use—"Occupation to be valid must be effective," "spheres of influence," and such like. Meanwhile German agents, including the notorious Karl Peters, were busy in Zanzibar, intriguing with the Sultan, and sending expeditions into the interior to secure concessions. Some day the history will be written of the part played in that contest by men like Sir Frederick Lugard, who, while they could not prevent the creation of German East Africa, saved Uganda and the East African Protectorate for Britain. In 1890 came the Caprivi Agreement, as a consequence of which Heligoland was

ceded to Germany. It settled the boundaries of German East Africa, but it did more, for it gave to German South-West Africa a strip of land running north-east to the Zambesi, which formed a wedge separating the Bechuanaland Protectorate from Angola and North-West Rhodesia.

There could be no objection in international law or ethics to Germany's African activity, though there might be much to her methods of conducting it. She had a right to get as much territory as she could, and to profit by the blindness of her rivals. But by 1890 a new and more watchful spirit was appearing in British Africa, and to some extent in the mother-country. Cecil Rhodes was beginning his great struggle with Paul Kruger for the road to the north, and the dream of a Cape to Cairo route seized upon the popular imagination. British imperialists sighed for a Monroe doctrine for Africa, but the day for that had long gone by. A solid German fence had been built across that northern avenue which might have joined up Nyassaland and North-East Rhodesia with Uganda and the Sudan. Meanwhile Germany, having got her colonies, did not handle them with great discretion. She was much out of pocket over them, for she lavished money on the construction of roads and railways, and especially on that cast-iron type of administration which was the Prussian ideal. Her first blunder was her treatment of her settlers, who found themselves terribly swathed in red tape, and were apt to trek over the border to more liberal British climes. Her second was her attitude towards the native population. Unaccustomed to allow ancient modes of life to continue side by side with the new—which is the British plan—she attempted to make of the Bantu peoples decorous citizens on the Prussian model; and, when they objected, gave them a taste of Prussian rigour. One of the ablest of German students of colonial policy, Dr. Moritz Bonn, has noted the result so far as concerned South-West Africa: "We solved the native problem by smashing tribal life and by creating a scarcity of labour."

Beginning from the west, the first colony, Togoland, was about the size of Ireland, and was bounded on one side by French Dahomey, and on the other by the British Gold Coast. It was shaped like a pyramid, with its narrow end on the sea, for its coastline was only thirty-two miles. About a million natives inhabited it, chiefly Hausas, and the whites numbered about four hundred. It was a thriving little colony, with a docile and industrious population, and a large trade in palm oil, cocoa, rubber, and cotton,

while the natives were considerable owners of cattle, sheep, and goats. One railway ran inland from Lome, and there was a network of admirable roads, which were a credit to any tropical country. Farther south the German Cameroons lay between British Nigeria and French Congo, and extended from Lake Chad in the north to the Ubangi and Congo rivers. Its area was about one-third larger than the German Empire in Europe, and its population of 3,500,000 contained 2,000 whites, and the rest Bantu and Sudanese tribes. In the south lay the Spanish enclave of Rio Muni, or Spanish Guinea, which was an enclave owing to the arrangements which followed the trouble with France over Morocco in 1911, when Germany obtained a long, narrow strip of French Congo to the south and east of the Cameroons. This Naboth's vineyard was one of the pieces of territory which Bernhardt had marked down for speedy German acquisition. The Cameroons was a colony of great possibilities, for it contained a range of high mountains, which might form a health station for white residents, while the soil was rich and water abundant. Its products were much the same as those of Togoland, but its forests provided also valuable timber, and there was a certain mineral development. Some roads had been made, and 150 miles of railway, but trouble with the native tribes had done much to handicap progress.

Following the western coast-line past the Congo mouth and the Portuguese territory of Angola, a more important colony was reached in German South-West Africa. Its area was some 320,000 square miles, considerably larger than the Cameroons, and it stretched from the Angola border to its march with Cape Colony on the Orange River. Its native population used to be 300,000, but at the beginning of the war, owing to the Herero campaign, it was little over 100,000—chiefly Bushmen, Hottentots, and Ovambo; while the whites numbered 15,000 and included many agricultural settlers. German South-West Africa was the only German colony where the small farmer, as opposed to the planter, seemed to flourish. In spite of the dryness of the climate the land gave excellent pasturage, and there was considerable mineral wealth in the shape of copper and diamonds. The latter were discovered in 1906 near Luderitz Bay, and promised at one time to become a serious competitor to the mines of Kimberley and the Transvaal. The colony had two chief ports—Swakopmund, half-way down the coast-line, and just north of the little British enclave of Walfish Bay, and Luderitz Bay, or Angra Pequena, nearer the southern border. The capital, Windhoek,





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## GERMANY'S AFRICAN COLONIES.

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was 200 miles from the coast, in a direct line east from Swakopmund. Some note must be taken of the railways, which were built with a strategical as well as a commercial purpose. A railway quadrilateral had been formed, of which the northern side was Swakopmund to Windhoek, the eastern Windhoek to Keetmanshoop, and the southern Keetmanshoop to Luderitz Bay. From Swakopmund an unfinished line ran for several hundred miles north-east towards the Caprivi strip which abutted on the Zambesi. But the most important strategical extension was in the south, where a branch ran from Rietfontein to Warmbad, which was within easy distance of the Orange River and the frontier of the Cape Province.

The last and greatest of the German colonies was German East Africa, which was twice the size of European Germany. It had a population of 8,000,000, which included in normal times about 5,000 white men. The wide variations of climate and landscape which it contained gave it endless possibilities. Its northern frontier ran from the coast south of Mombasa, just north of the great snow mass of Kilimanjaro, to the Victoria Nyanza, of which two-thirds were in German territory. Going westward, it included the eastern shores of Lakes Kivu and Tanganyika, as well as the north-eastern shore of Lake Nyassa. It had Britain for its neighbour on the north and part of the west borders, while the remainder of the west marched with the Belgian Congo, and the whole of the south with Portuguese Mozambique. The islands of Pemba and Zanzibar, under British protection, dominated the northern part of its coast-line of 620 miles. The vast lake region of the west provided admirable means of transit, and was eminently suitable for tropical agriculture. Elsewhere water was a difficulty, for the only river of any size was the Rufiji, and the snows of Kilimanjaro largely drained towards British territory. Nevertheless it was a land of great potential agricultural and pastoral wealth; its forest riches were enormous; gold was known to exist in large quantities, as well as base metals and soda deposits. On this colony Germany especially expended money and care. She was resolved to make it a planter's country, and huge agricultural estates were the rule. Four excellent ports, Lindi, Kilwa, Tanga, and the capital, Dar-es-Salaam, made commerce easy, and the colony was well served by the great German steamship lines. Two railways ran into the interior, and competed with the Uganda railway to Port Florence. One, running from Tanga to Moschi, served the rich foothills of Kilimanjaro, and was destined to be



continued to Victoria Nyanza. A second, which was only completed in 1914, ran from Dar-es-Salaam to Tabora, an important junction of caravan routes, and was continued thence to Ujiji, on Tanganyika. All such railways were intended under happier circumstances to be connected at their railheads by the great Cape to Cairo route. It will be seen that, if in West Africa Germany had acquired no more than ordinary tropical colonies, and in South-West Africa something of a white elephant, in East Africa she had won a territory which might some day be among the richest of African possessions.

The first blow was struck in Togoland. That small colony was in an impossible strategic position, with French and British territory enveloping it on three sides, and a coast-line open to the attack of British warships. Its military forces were at the outside 250 whites and 3,000 natives. In the early days of August a British cruiser summoned Lome, and the town surrendered without a blow. The German forces fell back one hundred miles inland to Atakpame, where was situated Kamina, one of the chief German overseas wireless stations. Meantime part of the Gold Coast Regiment had crossed the western frontier in motor cars, while the French in Dahomey had entered on the east. By Monday, the 10th of August, the whole of southern Togoland was in the hands of the Allies, and the British and French advanced against the Government station of Atakpame. On 25th August they crossed the river Monu, and by 27th August, with very few casualties, they occupied Atakpame, destroyed the wireless station, and secured the unconditional surrender of the German troops. Togoland had become a colony of the Allies, normal trade was resumed, and in two months' time there was nothing to distinguish it from Dahomey and the Gold Coast.

A far more intricate problem was presented by the Cameroons. Strategically this colony also was hemmed in by the Allies, but the great distances and the difficulty of communication made a concerted scheme not easy to execute. It was arranged that two French columns should move from French Congo, while the British columns should enter at several points on the Nigerian frontier. There is reason to believe that both on the French and British side the advance was made without adequate preparation. It was the rainy season in West Africa, and any campaign in a tangled and ill-mapped country was liable to awkward surprises. A mounted infantry detachment of the West African Frontier



Force left Kano on 8th August, crossed the frontier on 25th August after a heavy march, and occupied the German post of Tepe, on the Benue River. Next day it advanced along the Benue as far as Saratse, and on the 29th attacked the river station of Garua. One fort was captured, but on the 30th the Germans counter-attacked in force, and drove back the British troops to Nigerian soil. No better luck attended the other two expeditions which about the same time entered from Nigeria at more westerly points on the frontier. One entering from Ikom met with little resistance, and about 30th August occupied the German station of Nsanakong, five miles from the border. The other expedition, moving in from Calabar close to the coast, occupied Archibong on 29th August. A week later, at Nsanakong, as at Garua, the Germans counter-attacked in force. They arrived about two in the morning, and met with a stubborn resistance until the British ammunition was exhausted, when the garrison endeavoured to cut its way out with the bayonet. The bulk of them managed to retreat to Nigeria, but three British officers and one hundred natives were killed, and many were taken prisoners. Thereupon the Germans crossed the frontier, and occupied the Nigerian station of Okuri, north-east of Calabar, from which, however, they soon retired.

The land attack having failed, recourse was had to the sea. For some time the British warships *Cumberland* and *Dwarf* had been watching the mouth of the Cameroon River and the approaches to the German port, Duala. On 14th September a bold attempt was made to blow up the *Dwarf* by an infernal machine. Two days later, a German merchantman, the *Nachtigal*, tried to ram the British gunboat, but was wrecked, with the loss of thirty-six men. A few days later two German launches made another attempt with spar-torpedoes, but once again the attack miscarried. On 27th September an Anglo-French force, under Brigadier-General Dobell, appeared before Duala, and the bombardment resulted in its unconditional surrender. Bonaberi, the neighbouring coast town, fell also, and the *Cumberland* captured eight merchantmen belonging to the Woermann and Hamburg-Amerika lines. At the same time a German gunboat, the *Soden*, probably constructed for river work, was seized, and put into commission in the British navy. Meanwhile the French, operating from Libreville in French Congo, and covered by the warship *Surprise*, attacked Ukoko on Corisco Bay, and sank two armed vessels, the *Khios* and the *Itolo*.

With the chief port in their hands, and the coast as a base, the Allies could now advance with better hopes of success. The

Germans retreated by the valley of the river Wuri, and by the two interior railways. During October the half-circle of conquered territory was rapidly widened, while isolated entries were made from the northern and southern frontiers. Jabassi, on the Wuri, was taken, and Japoma, the railway terminus. The Allies had now the measure of the enemy, and could afford to advance at their leisure. By 1st October the Cameroons, so far as it was of any value to Germany in the struggle, was virtually captured. The wireless stations had been destroyed, the coast was ours, and the German troops were reduced to defensive warfare in a difficult hinterland.

In German South-West Africa the situation was different from that in the other German colonies of the East and West. There over the frontier lay not a British Crown possession, but a self-governing dominion. Elsewhere a cable from the Colonial Office could mobilize the British defence, but in South Africa there was an independent Parliament and a miscellany of parties to be persuaded. Further, the ground had been carefully baited. Intrigues had been long afoot among the irreconcilable elements in the Dutch population, and the highest of German authorities had not thought it undignified to speak words in season, and to hold out hopes of a new and greater Afrikander republic. Elsewhere the German colonies had to fight their battles unaided, but here there was every expectation of powerful assistance from within the enemy's camp. Till the situation developed the campaign on Germany's part must be defensive, and for this rôle German South-West Africa had many advantages. Her capital was far inland, and, since she could hope for no assistance by sea, it mattered little if her ports were seized. Her railways on the south ran down almost to the Cape frontier, but between the Cape railheads and her border stretched the desert of the Kalahari, and the dry and waterless plains of north-west Cape Colony. At least two hundred miles separated the branch railways at Carnarvon and Prieska from the nearest German territory, and the distance from Kimberley on the main northern line was little less than four hundred. At one point only had the British forces reasonable means of access by land. From Port Nolloth a line ran inland to serve the copper lands of Namaqualand, and from one station on it, Steinkopf, a sixty-mile track led to Raman's Drift, on the Orange River, a point about fifty miles from the terminus of the German railway at Warmbad.

On the declaration of war the German governor, Dr. Seitz,

put at once into force the long-prepared scheme of defence. The Germans, about 10th August, abandoned their two principal stations on the coast, Swakopmund and Luderitz Bay, and retired with all military stores to their inland capital of Windhoek. Before leaving they destroyed the jetty, and dismantled and sank the tugs in the harbour of Swakopmund. By 20th August they had made small incursions into British territory, entrenching themselves in certain places among the kopjes, and skirmishing with the frontier farmers. When General Botha met the Union Parliament on 8th September he was able to inform it that Germany had begun hostilities. In a speech of great dignity and power, he announced that after careful consideration he and his colleagues had decided to carry the war into German territory, "in the interests of South Africa as well as of the Empire." He had information about German machinations which was denied to the ordinary politician, and the great majority of the members of Parliament were ready to trust his judgment. The sole opposition came from General Hertzog, who succeeded in mustering only twelve votes in the House of Assembly and five in the Senate. Yet it is clear that his views were largely held in the country, and that many burghers looked with alarm upon a policy of active operations. These men lived chiefly in the districts bordering upon German South-West Africa, in the Orange Free State and in the Western Transvaal, and they argued that, as long as Germany left Union territory alone, no offensive measures should be taken against her. It did not require any great political acumen to foresee that such an attitude was impossible. Sleeping dogs may be best left alone, but when ninety-nine of the pack are tearing in full cry across Europe it is folly to suppose that the hundredth will continue its slumbers.

The beginning of September saw scattered fighting in the south-eastern angle of the frontier. Information was received that a considerable German force was advancing to Raman's Drift, on the Orange, with the intention of entrenching themselves and disputing the northward passage of British troops. The 4th South African Rifles left the Port Nolloth railway at Steinkopf, marched the sixty miles to the river, and surprised a German garrison at the drift on 15th September. After a fight in which only one man was killed, they captured the German blockhouse, and received the surrender of the garrison. They sent patrols up the Orange, and ousted the enemy from the kopjes, while with a larger force they compelled the Germans to evacuate an entrenched

position farther north. To set against this success, the Germans on 17th September surprised a small British post at Nakob, a point near the Orange just outside the south-eastern angle of the frontier. The victors carried off some cattle and a number of prisoners, and retired, leaving a small garrison. The next day witnessed a British counterstroke by sea. On 18th September a force sailing to Luderitz Bay occupied the town, and hoisted the Union Jack on the town hall. The Germans had destroyed the wireless station, but otherwise the place was undamaged. While this frontier fighting was taking place there was a widespread martial enthusiasm throughout the Union. General Botha, who had agreed to take command of the army, called for 7,000 men—5,000 foot and 2,000 mounted infantry—and to his appeal there was an immediate and adequate response. Recruiting was stimulated by the news of three unimportant German raids, two across the Orange at Pella and Rietfontein, which they occupied, and one upon Walfish Bay, which failed disastrously. Meantime the Rhodesian Police had occupied the far north-western post of Schuckmansburg, in the Caprivi strip, and had forestalled any danger from that quarter. At this time the strategical idea seems to have been a British advance simultaneously from Rhodesia, down the Orange River and from the Port Nolloth railway, while a movement would also be made inland from the coast ports.

With the end of September there came heavier fighting. Between Warmbad and Raman's Drift lies a place called Sandfontein, important as one of the few spots where water can be got in that arid desert. On 25th September a small force of South African Mounted Rifles and Transvaal Horse Artillery pushed forward to the water-hole, which lay in a cup-shaped hollow, commanded by kopjes, and with the only retreat through an awkward defile. Early on the 26th the Germans brought up guns to the heights, and till noon bombarded the water-hole, while a considerable force held the pass in the rear. The British troops made a gallant fight till their ammunition was exhausted, and then, having first rendered their guns useless, were forced to surrender. Their total strength seems to have been no more than 200, and out of it they lost 16 killed, 43 wounded, and a large number of prisoners and missing. The German commander, Lieutenant-Colonel von Heydebreck, behaved like a good soldier, complimented the survivors on their defence, and buried the British dead with the honours of war. The affair at Sandfontein was in many ways mysterious. It looked as if we had had false infor-



mation, or treacherous guides, to have been betrayed into so hopeless a battle. A fortnight later came news which explained much and revealed a very ugly state of things in the north-west of the Cape Province. The British forces there were under the command of a certain Lieutenant-Colonel S. G. Maritz, who had fought on the Dutch side in the South African War, and had assisted the Germans in their struggles with the Hereros. Maritz was the ordinary type of soldier of fortune not uncommon in South Africa, florid, braggart, gallant after his fashion, but with little scientific knowledge of war. General Botha found reason to suspect his loyalty, and dispatched Colonel Conrad Brits to take over his command. Maritz refused to come in, and challenged Brits to come himself and relieve him. The latter sent Major Ben Bouwer as his deputy, who was made prisoner by Maritz, but subsequently released, and sent back with an ultimatum to the Union Government. This ultimatum declared that, unless the Government guaranteed that before a certain date Generals Hertzog, De Wet, Beyers, Kemp, and Muller should be allowed to come and meet him and give him their instructions, he would forthwith invade the Union.

Major Bouwer had other interesting matters to report. To quote the dispatch of the Governor-General: "Maritz was in possession of some guns belonging to the Germans, and held the rank of general commanding the German troops. He had a force of Germans under him, in addition to his own rebel commando. He had arrested all those of his officers and men who were unwilling to join the Germans, and had then sent them forward as prisoners to German South-West Africa. Major Bouwer saw an agreement between Maritz and the Governor of German South-West Africa, guaranteeing the independence of the Union as a republic, ceding Walfish Bay and certain other portions of the Union to the Germans, and undertaking that the Germans would only invade the Union on the invitation of Maritz. Major Bouwer was shown numerous telegrams and helio messages dating back to the beginning of September. Maritz boasted that he had ample guns, rifles, ammunition, and money from the Germans, and that he would overrun the whole of South Africa."

The immediate result of this discovery was the proclamation of martial law throughout the Union and a general strengthening of the Union forces. The time had now come for every man in South Africa to reveal where lay his true sympathies, and the centre of action was soon to shift from the western borders to the

very theatre where for three years the British army had striven against the present generalissimo of the Union forces. Meantime Maritz proved a broken reed to his new allies. His one asset was an intimate local knowledge of the waterless north-west. He had small notion of serious warfare, and was incompetent to control his ill-assorted forces. He fixed his base near Upington, on the Orange, and dispatched a portion of his command of 2,000 to march southward up the Great Fish River against Kenhart and Calvinia. Brits lost no time in harrying the Upington commando, and on 15th October captured a part of it at Ratedrai, many of the men voluntarily surrendering. On the 22nd Maritz attacked Keimoes, a British station on the Orange, south-west of Upington. But its small garrison of 150, after holding on till reinforcements reached it, drove him back, and captured four of his officers. Maritz then moved west down the Orange to Kakamas, where Brits fell upon him so fiercely that he lost all his tents and stores, and was compelled to withdraw, wounded, over the German frontier. He made another sally on the 30th, but was conclusively beaten by Brits at Schuit Drift, and driven finally out of the colony. Meantime the commando which had marched up the Great Fish River had no better success. It travelled fast, and by 25th October had covered 200 miles and was close to Calvinia. Here Colonel Van Deventer beat it heavily, taking ninety prisoners and the two Maxim guns which Maritz had confiscated from the Union army. The commando was hopelessly broken, and "drives," organized by Van Deventer and Sir Duncan Mackenzie, collected its remnants at their leisure. It was fortunate for the British cause, for a far more formidable rebellion under abler leaders than Maritz was now threatening in the very heart of the Union.

The situation in East Africa in the first months of war was the gravest which any British colony had to face. The German province was rich, well-organized, and strategically well-situated, for the Uganda railway, which formed the sole communications between Uganda, the East African plateau, and the sea, ran parallel with the northern frontier at a distance of from fifty to one hundred miles, and offered a natural and easy object of attack. The original German scheme of operations, while providing for invasions of Nyassaland, North-East Rhodesia, and the British shores of Victoria Nyanza, aimed especially at an advance by land against Mombasa and the railway, which should be assisted by

the *Königsberg* from the sea. The German general, von Lettow-Vorbeck, was an officer of the General Staff, who had once been Chief of Staff in the Posen district. He came to Africa in the spring of 1914, and set himself at once to develop the local levies. For the native troops he drew upon the best fighting races of Africa—Sudanese, Somali, Zulu, and Wanyamwezi. He was a specialist in machine guns, and he saw the advantage of this weapon for bush fighting. His men were immune against tropical diseases; they knew the tangled country like their own hand; and his transport, being entirely by porters, was not incommoded by the bad roads. Moreover, like most of his countrymen, he had little conscience as to the treatment of natives, and could enforce discipline by the lash and the chain. One way and another he provided a fighting force of some 4,000 white and 25,000 native troops. His instructions from Berlin were to maintain the defence of the colony at all costs. His first tactics were offensive, but he had no real hope of a campaign of conquest; his aim was to pin down to a difficult and unprofitable war the largest possible number of British troops, while the fate of German Africa was being decided on the battlefields of Europe.

The British forces at the start were preposterously small. In British East Africa and Uganda they consisted of two battalions of the King's African Rifles, mainly stationed on the northern frontier and in Jubaland, where a punitive expedition had just been dispatched against some of the Somali and Abyssinian tribes. All companies were at once recalled, and police were obtained for the defence of the railway line, by means of calling out the reserves and weakening police posts wherever possible. Two volunteer corps were raised among the white settlers; the existing Uganda Railway Volunteers—less than 100—were called out, and employed in guarding bridges; and as time went on further volunteer units were raised from Indian residents. A small body of Somali scouts was created, and a number of Arabs were recruited by Captain Wavell, one of the few Englishmen who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. In Nyassaland and North-East Rhodesia there were small bodies of police, aided by white volunteers.

The total British defence force, therefore, in the first three weeks of war may be put at under 1,200, much of it of doubtful quality. The King's African Rifles were first-class fighting men, and the new Mounted Rifles, recruited from young British settlers of good blood and from the Boers of Uasin Gishu, were a force whose members reached a remarkable standard of shooting and

veldcraft. But it was impossible that so small an army could have made a serious stand if the Germans had pushed their northern invasion with vigour. On 13th August the campaign began by an attack of a British cruiser on the German capital, Dar-es-Salaam. The port was bombarded, and landing parties made their way into the harbour and destroyed the new wireless installation, dismantled the German ships, and sank the floating dock. On the same day, on Lake Nyassa, the British steamer *Gwendolen* surprised the German steamer *Von Wissmann* at Sphinxhaven on the eastern shore, took her crew and captain prisoners, and rendered her helpless. Three weeks later two vigorous attacks were made in the south-west. At Karongwa, one of the chief British ports on Lake Nyassa, a small garrison of fifty was attacked by a force of 400, but held on long enough for supports to arrive. These supports decisively defeated the invaders, and drove them over the border with the loss of half their white officers. The second attack was made upon Abercorn in North-East Rhodesia, just south of Lake Tanganyika. A body of Rhodesian police drove it back, and captured a field gun. Fighting continued intermittently all along this part of the frontier, but the balance leaned heavily in the British favour. Germany was keeping her best troops for her northern campaign.

On 3rd September reinforcements arrived for the British. Brigadier-General J. M. Stewart reached Nairobi and assumed command of all the British troops. He brought with him two Indian battalions and three batteries. He had come only just in time, for the Germans were beginning operations against the Uganda railway. About 20th August they had seized the small frontier post of Taveta under Kilimanjaro, which was in dangerous proximity to their chief northern military post of Moschi. They had also taken the frontier post of Vanga, on the coast, due south from Mombasa. Early in September they sent a detachment to blow up the Uganda railway at Maungu. The history of this expedition is curious. It arrived comfortably within twenty miles of the line, guided by the excellent German maps. There, however, the maps stopped, and it was compelled to have recourse to English ones. The result was that it missed the water-holes, went eight miles out of its course, and was captured to a man. Thus may the deficiencies of a Survey Department prove an asset in war. A more serious advance was made on 6th September, when a force of Germans, about 600 strong, marched down the Tsavo River. They were much delayed by a



mounted infantry company of King's African Rifles, who harassed them day and night, and gave time for a half-battalion of Punjabis and several companies of the King's African Rifles to come up. An engagement was fought about five miles from the Tsavo railway bridge, and the enemy was driven back in some confusion. This success enabled us to establish advance posts at Mzima and Campiya Marabu, which managed to maintain their position against repeated German assaults. Three days later, on 10th September, the northern frontier was crossed at its extreme western end. The Germans occupied the frontier town of Kisi, near the Victoria Nyanza. On the 12th two companies of King's African Rifles, with two Maxims and some native police, surprised this force, which retired in disorder upon the lake port of Karungu. About the same time an action was fought on the lake itself. Two German dhows were sunk, and the British steamer *Winifred* sailed into Karungu Bay to relieve the town. At first it was driven off, but it returned with a colleague, the *Kavirondo*, and in the face of the British strength the Germans evacuated Karungu and fell back over the border.

During September there were other attacks on the northern frontier, making a total of seven in all, but much the most dangerous was the advance along the coast from Vanga towards Mombasa. The expedition was to be supported by the *Königsberg*, which was to shell the town and occupy the island, while the land forces were to destroy the bridge connecting Mombasa with the mainland. Something prevented the *Königsberg* from playing its part—perhaps the presence of British warships—but the land attack came very near succeeding. The Germans were 600 strong, with six machine guns, and they were met at Gazi by Captain Wavell's Arab company, strengthened by some King's African Rifles from Jubaland. This little force held up the invaders for several days, and on 2nd October was reinforced by Indian troops. Gazi was a very fine performance, for practically all the European officers were wounded before help arrived, and the command of the King's African Rifles passed to a native colour-sergeant, who handled his men with great coolness and skill, and headed the charge which drove back the enemy.

Towards the end of October the German attacks slackened. On 1st November a second Indian Expeditionary Force arrived on the East African coast. It was commanded by Major-General Aitken, and consisted of one British battalion—the 1st Loyal North Lancashires—and various units of the Indian army. On

the morning of 2nd November this force, escorted by two gunboats, lay off the German port of Tanga, the coast terminus of the Moschi railway, and summoned it to surrender. The officer in charge asked for some hours' grace in order that he might communicate with the Governor, who was then absent. This was granted, and the original time was largely extended, and used by the Germans to hurry down every available soldier by the Moschi line. Towards evening the British general grew impatient, and landed one and a half battalions, who advanced through the coast scrub towards the town. There it was apparent that a strong defence had been prepared, and the invaders had to fall back towards the shore, where they could be covered by the gunboats. The next day was occupied in landing the rest of the force, and the attack was renewed on the morning of the 4th. It proved a complete failure. The Germans had mastered the art of bush fighting. Ropes were hidden under the sand of the paths, and, when stepped on, brought down flags which gave the enemy the required range. The attack left an open flank which von Lettow-Vorbeck promptly enfiladed with machine guns. We reached and partly entered the town of Tanga, only to be forced back with heavy losses. There was nothing for it but to retire to the coast and re-embark. Our casualties were nearly 800, and included 141 British officers and men, so that the Tanga reverse was the most costly of the minor African battles. General Aitken's force went north to the East African Plateau, where it continued precariously during the next months to act as a garrison and watch the borders. So far the enemy had clearly won the honours. There was as yet no attempt by the British Government, deeply engaged in Europe, to co-ordinate military plans on the various frontiers of the German colony or to furnish an adequate force for attack or even for defence.

### III.

Meantime in South Africa there had broken out the only rebellion, with the exception of the Irish affair of Easter, 1916, which the campaign produced within the confines of the British Empire. The grant of self-government to the Transvaal and Orange Free State in 1906, four years after the conclusion of the South African War, was a bold step, which occasioned much uneasiness to those who were most familiar with the temper of the back-veld. A strong people like the Boers do not surrender

readily their dreams, and their tenacity of purpose was kept alive by certain sections of the Dutch Church, and by the ignorance and remoteness from modern life of the rural population. That the venture did not end in disaster was due to two events which could not have been foreseen. One was the movement towards a Union of South Africa, the foundations of which had been laid by Lord Milner's reconstruction after the war, and which Lord Selborne, aided by a brilliant band of young Englishmen, brought to a successful conclusion. The second was the appearance of two Dutch statesmen of the first quality. The old Afrikaner leaders, like Mr. Hofmeyer, had often been men of great ability and foresight, but they had lacked the accommodating temper of statesmanship. General Botha, the first Prime Minister of the Union, had been the ablest of the Boer generals, and his subsequent work entitled him to a high place among Imperial statesmen. He had the large simplicity of character and the natural magnetism which makes the born leader of men; his record in the field gave him the devoted allegiance of the old commandos; he was a sincere patriot, both of South Africa and of the Empire, for, though abating nothing of his loyalty towards the land of his birth, he saw that the fortunes of South Africa were bound up inextricably with the fortunes of the Empire as a whole; while he had the noble opportunism, the wide practical sagacity, which enabled him to move by slow degrees and to conciliate divergent interests by sheer tact and goodwill. His lieutenant, General J. C. Smuts, had won fame alike as a scholar, a lawyer, and a commander in the field. With greater knowledge and a keener intellect than his chief, he had not Botha's gift of popularity and popular leadership; but between them the two showed a combination of talents which it would be hard to parallel from any other part of the British dominions.

Botha had no easy part to play. The Unionist Party, led first by Sir Starr Jameson and then by Sir Thomas Smartt, while remaining the official Opposition, might be trusted to co-operate in all reasonable legislation. But among the Dutch there was a section, led by General Hertzog, and drawing its support chiefly from the Orange Free State, which was definitely anti-British, and aimed not at racial union but at Dutch ascendancy. It was a true party of reaction, narrow and sectional in its aims, and bitter in its spirit. There was also growing up on the Rand and in the industrial centres a Labour Party, largely officered by professional agitators from overseas, which realized the delicacy

of South African economic conditions, and aimed at a "hold-up" in the interests of a class. It will thus be seen that South African politics showed few affinities with those of other British countries. The party in power, Botha's, was a Conservative Party, composed mainly of landowners and farmers, and representing landed capital; the Opposition, mainly British in blood, contained most of the industrial capitalists, and was mildly progressive in character; the Labour Party was not such as we are familiar with in Britain, but in the main rigidly "class" in its aims and anarchical in its methods; while the Hertzogites were nakedly reactionary and obscurantist. As usually happens, the two extremes tended to form a working alliance, and the extraordinary spectacle was seen of the Rand agitator and the *takhaar* from the wilds meeting on the same platform. Botha before the war began had cleared the air by two bold steps. He had dismissed Hertzog from his Ministry, and definitely dissociated himself from his aims, thereby driving the Hertzogites into violent opposition. Then he had dealt faithfully with the Labour Party. The first great strike on the Rand in 1913 had been a success, for the Government were unprepared, and the strike leaders dictated their own terms. The second attempt was a fiasco. The Government called out all its forces, the reign of terror was broken in three days, and ten of the leaders were summarily deported under martial law. The result was to bring the official Opposition much closer to the Government, but to array against the Prime Minister a dangerous faction made up of the Hertzogites and the defeated and discredited Labour Party.

The advent of war made a new division. Hertzog found that he could not collect a following, and became a trimmer. He attacked the Government, but forbore to aid the rebels when the insurrection broke out. The Labour Party, considering their previous treatment, behaved with genuine patriotism; many of their leaders took service in the new army, the working men of the Rand hastened to enlist, and General Botha's rescinding of the deportation order was a fitting recognition of this loyalty. But meantime a very serious falling away was becoming apparent in the ranks of the Dutch. It cut across political parties, for some of the Hertzogites supported Botha's policy, and intriguers were busy among those who had never followed Hertzog. The great mass of the Dutch people never wavered. Maritz's performance had offended many who would otherwise have been lukewarm on the British side, for he had in effect invaded the Cape



province with foreign troops. But in certain districts a general discontent with the trend of modern politics, and dark memories of the South African War, combined with religious fanaticism to produce a dangerous temper. Presently treason found its leaders.

In the war of 1899-1902 there was a certain predikant of Lichtenburg, Van Rensburg by name, who acquired a reputation for second sight. He used to be known to our Intelligence Department as "Delarey's prophet," and was supposed to have much influence over that distinguished general. After peace he went on living in Lichtenburg, and that influence increased, while his reputation spread far and wide through the back-veld. When war with Germany broke out he discovered that the events foretold in the Book of Revelation were at hand, and that Germany was the agent appointed of God to purify the world. If we dared to draw the sword upon her he prophesied the blackest sorrows. He had a number of visions, one of red and blue and black bulls, and one of an angel perched on the Paardekraal monument, which he interpreted on the same lines. The disaster at Hex River on 11th September to the troop-train carrying the Kaffrarian Rifles seemed to the superstitious a vindication of his forecast. Four days later came a second instalment. The prophet had an eye to local politics, and had announced that Delarey, Beyers, and De Wet were the leaders destined to restore the old Republic. On the night of 15th September Delarey and Beyers were travelling in a motor car westward from Johannesburg, and were challenged by a police patrol which was on the look-out for a gang of desperadoes. Beyers bade the car drive on, probably fearing that his plot had been betrayed, and a shot was fired which ricocheted and killed Delarey. The true story of that night and of Delarey's intentions will never be fully known. It seems probable that he had been won over to rebellion, though it is difficult for those who shared the friendship of that high-minded gentleman to believe that he would have brought himself to violate the oath of allegiance which he had taken to the British Crown.

About Beyers's disloyalty there was soon little doubt. Early in September he had resigned his post as Commandant-General of the Union Defence Force, in a letter which revealed more than he intended, and to which General Smuts most effectively replied. He had done brilliant work in the Zoutpansberg during the South African War, and probably ranked next after Botha, Delarey, and Smuts among the Dutch commanders. But for some time German agents had been working upon his vanity, while the "Prophet"

played upon his sombre religion. He had visited Germany, and been received by the Emperor, and from that honour he had never recovered. We need not judge him too hardly, for he paid the penalty of his folly; and it would be unreasonable to expect that rebellion would seem a heinous crime to one who, twelve years before, had been fighting against Britain. The real gravamen of his offence was that he broke the military oath which he had sworn as Commandant-General. Along with General Kemp, a former lieutenant of Delarey's and a good soldier, he proceeded to stir up disaffection in the Western Transvaal. With him was joined the famous Christian de Wet, whose name was at one time a household word among us. De Wet was not a general of the calibre of Botha, Smuts, and Delarey, and his chronic lack of discipline spoiled more than one of the last-named's movements. But as a guerilla fighter in his own countryside he had no equal. He had not Delarey's moral dignity or Beyers's knowledge of modern conditions, being a Boer of the old, stiff, narrow, back-veld type, with a strong vein of religious fanaticism. But his name was one to conjure with, and his accession to the ranks of the irreconcilables vastly increased the difficulty of the Government's problem. The main strength of the movement lay in the "bywoner," or squatter class, the "poor whites" who had been created by the Boer system of large farms and large families. For them the future held no hope. In the old days they had staffed the various treks into the wilderness, but outlets were closing, and Africa was filling up. They had little education or intelligence, but they had enough to know that their economic position was growing desperate, and they not unnaturally struck for revolution when the chance came. They made up the bulk of De Wet's men; the rest were a few religious fanatics, a few republican theorists, some men who still cherished bitter memories of the last war, and a number of social *déclassés* and unsuccessful politicians. Little pity need be wasted on such, but it is not easy to withhold a certain sympathy for the luckless "bywoner," for whom the world held no longer a place.

The rebellion was not long in revealing itself. On 26th October the Union Government announced that De Wet was busy commandeering burghers in the north of the Orange Free State, while Beyers was at the same task in the western Transvaal. On the 24th the former had seized Heilbron, a little town in the north Free State, on a branch of the main line from Cape Town to Pretoria. Further, at Reitz, he had stopped a train and arrested some Union

soldiers who were travelling by it. Beyers, meantime, with a commando formed chiefly of Delarey's old soldiers, was in Rustenburg, threatening Pretoria. Botha at once summoned the burghers to put down the revolt, and to their eternal honour they responded willingly. It was no easy decision for many of them. They were called on to fight against men of their own blood, some of whom had been their comrades or their leaders in the last war. From farm to farm went the summons, and many a farmer took down his Mauser, which had shot nothing but buck since Diamond Hill or Colesberg, and up-saddled his pony, as he had done before the great Sand River concentration. The magic name of Botha did not fail in its appeal, and in a few weeks he had over 30,000 under arms. He was now a man of fifty-two years of age, tired with heavy years of office and a sedentary life, and not in the best of health. The rebellion must have been peculiarly bitter to one who had striven beyond all others for a united South African people, and who was not likely to forget the friendships of the old strenuous days.

He did not suffer the grass to grow under his feet. Resolving to clear Beyers out of the neighbourhood of the capital before he turned to deal with De Wet, he entrained for Rustenburg on the 26th and fell in with the enemy next day to the south of that town, about eighty miles from Pretoria, where the Zeerust road goes through the northern foothills of the Magaliesberg. There he smote Beyers and Kemp so fiercely that their commandos were scattered, eighty prisoners were taken, and the leaders fled incontinently to the south-west. Part of the rebel forces went northward into the hills of Waterberg, but the bulk of them followed their generals to Lichtenburg. In Lichtenburg Colonel Alberts was waiting for them. His first encounter was unfortunate, for 110 of his men were cut off from the rest, and captured at Treurfontein by the rebels. A day or two later he retrieved the disaster, recovered the prisoners, and thoroughly beat Claasen, the rebel leader. Meanwhile that portion of Beyers's force which had gone north to Waterberg, and which seems to have been under the command of Muller, was busied in raiding the line that runs north from Pretoria, till Colonel Van Deventer, fresh from his success in the Cape, hustled it back into the hills. On 8th November he caught the raiders at Sandfontein, near Warmbaths, some sixty miles from Pretoria, and dispersed them, with many killed, wounded, and prisoners. The remnants fled back to Rustenburg and the west.

By this time Botha had news of the whereabouts of Beyers and Kemp. Hunted by Colonel Lemmer, the former fled southwest to the flats of Bloemhof, crossed the Vaal River, and entered the Orange Free State. He had a sharp fight near the junction of the Vaal and the Vet, and lost about 400, as well as most of his transport, but succeeded himself in getting clear away. The men whom Colonel Alberts had already beaten were now with Kemp making for Bechuanaland and German territory. They were safe enough in that direction, for the Kalahari Desert at the end of the dry season might be trusted to take its toll of rash adventurers. On 7th November General Smuts made a speech in Johannesburg, in which, summing up the situation, he announced that the rebellion in the Cape was over, that the Transvaal rebels were now only a few scattered bands, and that in the Orange Free State alone, where De Wet was at work, had the revolt assumed any serious proportions.

De Wet had only a month of freedom, but he made good use of it so far as concerned the distance covered. Ten years before he would have made a very different fight among those flats and kopjes of the northern Free State, where spring was beginning to tinge with green the long umber and yellow distances. But now the stars in their courses fought against him. His own countrymen had become prudent, and did not see the admirable humour of sjamboking a magistrate who had once fined him five shillings for whipping a native. They gave information to the Government, and grudged ammunition and stores to the good cause. Once he had had fine sport in that district, slipping through blockhouse lines and eluding the clumsy British columns, but now he found himself being constantly brought up against that accursed thing, modern science. So long as he could trust to a good horse matters went well, but what was he to do when his pursuers took to motor cars which covered twenty miles where the British mounted infantry used to cover five? The times were out of joint for De Wet, and so he went sjamboking and commandeering through the land, perpetually losing his temper, and delivering bitter philippics against these latter days. General Botha was "ungodly," the English were "pestilential," Maritz was the only true man. Heresy, imperialism, and negrophilism were jumbled together as the enemy. "King Edward," he cried, with some pathos, "promised to protect us, but he did not keep his promise, and allowed a magistrate to be put over us." There we have the last cry of the *ancien régime* in South Africa, which



saw patriarchalism and personal government vanishing from a machine-made world.

De Wet was at Vrede on 28th October, when he had the famous interview with the magistrate already referred to. Meanwhile his lieutenant, Wessels, had looted Harrismith, near the Natal border, and damaged the railway line. Thereafter De Wet turned west, and found sanctuary in the neighbourhood of Winburg, where, on 7th November, at a place called Doornberg, he defeated a Union force under Commander Cronje, and lost his son David. At the time his army seems to have numbered 2,000 men. Next day a second rebel force was beaten at Kroonstad by Colonel Manie Botha, who continued the pursuit for several days. By this time Botha, having all but cleared the Transvaal, was on his way south, and on the 11th came in touch with De Wet at Marquard, about twenty miles east of Winburg. The rebels were in four bodies, one at Marquard, one at a place called Bantry, a third at Hoenderkop, and a fourth, with which was De Wet himself, in the Mushroom Valley. Botha's plan was to surround the whole rebel force, two Union armies, under Colonels Brits and Lukin, working round its flanks. Something went wrong, however, with the timing of the movement, and Lukin and Brits did not reach their allotted posts in time. In spite of this accident, De Wet was completely defeated. Botha took 282 prisoners, released most of the loyalists taken by the rebels, and captured a large quantity of transport. On the 13th it was officially announced that the interrupted train service between Bloemfontein and Johannesburg would be resumed.

De Wet at first fled south, but presently doubled back, and on the 16th was at Virginia, on the main line. Two armoured trains on the railway managed to prevent a large part of the rebel force from crossing, and to head it eastward. Presently some of its commandants began to come in, and many who had taken up arms, attracted by the clemency of Botha's proclamation, laid them down again. De Wet was aiming at a junction with Beyers, who was in the Hoopstad district at the time. Beyers, however, was in trouble on his own account. On the 15th, Colonel Celliers had fallen upon him at Bultfontein, and had beaten him thoroughly and made large captures. Most of the 1,500 rebels were driven northwards, many across the Vaal. Accordingly De Wet, fleeing from Virginia down the Sand and Vet Rivers, found Celliers ahead of him, and heard of Beyers's disaster. He saw that the game was up, and halted his force near Boshof. There seems to have been

considerable disaffection in its ranks, and in a final address to them he advised all who were tired of fighting to hide their rifles and go home. Many took the advice, including two of his sons, many yielded themselves to the Union forces, but De Wet himself, with twenty-five men, made one last dash for liberty. On 21st November he tried to cross the Vaal, and was driven back by Commandant Dutoit. In the evening, however, with a following now reduced to six, he managed to slip over the river above Bloemhof, and took the road for Vryburg and the north-west. He now picked up some fugitives, and the small commando crossed the railway line to Rhodesia, twenty miles north of Vryburg. He had, apparently, conceived the bold scheme of going through the Kalahari to German South-West Africa. But he had not allowed for the motor cars of his pursuers. For a day or two there was heavy rain, which made the roads bad, and gave the Boer ponies of his party an advantage over any motor. But by the 27th the weather had cleared, the veld was hard and dry, and Colonel Brits, who had taken up the chase, began to capture the slower members of the commando. As the fugitives penetrated into the western desert their case became more hopeless. De Wet was forced by the motors behind him to cover fifty miles at a stretch without off-saddling, a thing hateful to the Boer horse-master. The end came on 1st December, when, at a farm called Waterburg, about a hundred miles west of Mafeking, De Wet and his handful surrendered to Colonel Jordaan. He was taken to Vryburg, and two days later entered Johannesburg a prisoner. He had yielded at the end with a shaggy good humour. Having decided that modern conditions were the devil, he was glad to see his own Afrikaners such adepts at the use of the powers of darkness.

With the capture of De Wet the rebellion was virtually at an end. There was a good deal of skirmishing along the south and north banks of the lower Vaal. Kemp, accompanied by the Lichtenburg "Prophet," fled west after Treurfontein to the little town of Schweizer Reneke, and thence towards Vryburg. He had some fighting at Kuruman, from which he headed south-west across the southern Kalahari. He was engaged again north of Upington, and it was a very battered remnant which ultimately crossed the border of German South-West Africa. Early in December Botha organized a great sweeping movement from Reitz, which ended in the surrender of Wessels with the only large body of rebels still in the field. Beyers, with a small commando,

after his defeat at Bultfontein had haunted the southern shore of the Vaal between Hoopstad and Kroonstad. On the morning of 8th December he fell in with a body of Union troops under Captain Uys, and was driven towards the river. He and some companions endeavoured to cross the Vaal, which was in high flood, and midway in the stream he found his horse failing, and slipped from its back to swim. His greatcoat hampered him, and he tried in vain to get rid of it. A companion heard him cry, "I can do no more!" as he disappeared. His body was found two days later. He had been drowned, for there was no bullet mark on him.

By the end of December the last embers of disaffection had been stamped out within the Union territory. Of the five leaders whom Maritz had named, De Wet was captured, Muller was wounded and a prisoner, Beyers was dead, Kemp was across the German border, and Hertzog had never declared himself. In less than two months Botha had harried the rebels round the points of the compass, and had taken 7,000 of them prisoners, with a total casualty list to the Union army of no more than 334. He exhibited magnanimity and wisdom in his hour of triumph. Rebels who had been members of the Defence Force and had broken their military oath were very properly put on trial for their life. But to the rank and file he showed no harshness, and, in the interests of South Africa's future, this clemency was not misplaced. Rebellion could not, for the country Boers, carry the moral stigma which it would bear if dabbled in by an ordinary Briton. The Empire had no sentimental claim upon them, and the case for loyalty founded on material interests required a certain level of education before it could be understood. Besides, so far as the older race of Boers was concerned, insurrection was in their bones; it had always been a recognized political expedient, and, indeed, for more than a century had been the national pastime.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE WAR AT SEA : CORONEL AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS.

*14th September—8th December.*

Cradock and von Spee—Battle of Coronel—Sturdee leaves England with the Battle Cruisers—Battle of the Falkland Islands—Its Results.

ON 29th October, Prince Louis of Battenberg, who as First Sea Lord had done good service to his adopted country, retired from office, and Lord Fisher returned to the post which he had held four years before. Lord Fisher was beyond doubt the greatest living sailor, and the modern British navy was largely his creation. Explosive, erratic, a dangerous enemy, a difficult friend, this "proud and rebellious creature of God" had the width of imagination and the sudden lightning flashes of insight which entitle him to rank as a man of genius. Behind a smoke screen of vulgar rhodomontade, his powerful mind worked on the data of a vast experience. Moreover, he had that rarest of gifts—courage, as the French say, of the head as well as of the heart. His policy in war might be too bold or too whimsical, but it would never be timorous or supine.

The situation which he had to face in October did not differ greatly from that of the preceding months. Jellicoe, without adequate bases, was engaged in the difficult task of performing a multitude of duties while keeping intact his capital ships. He had to arrange for the convoying of the first contingent of Canadian troops, and to meet and defeat the German campaign of submarines and mines around the British coasts. On 16th October an alarm of enemy submarines at Scapa compelled him to leave that anchorage till its defences were complete, and, after moving his whole cruiser system farther north, he chose as his battleship bases the natural harbours of Skye and Mull, and Lough Swilly in Ireland. The German liner *Berlin*, which had managed to



slip through our North Sea patrols at the end of September, had sown mines in the north Irish waters, and one of them was struck on 27th October by the *Audacious* of the 2nd Battle Squadron, which sank after a twelve hours' struggle to get to port. As a protest and a protection against indiscriminate mine-laying in the great highways of ocean trade the British Admiralty on 2nd November notified to the world that the whole of the North Sea would thenceforth be regarded as a military area, and that neutral ships could only pass through it by conforming to Admiralty instructions and keeping to certain predetermined routes. Presently the situation improved, the defences of Scapa were completed, and the German submarine attack languished, as if its promoters were disappointed with its results and were casting about for a new policy.

It was well that the Admiralty had an easier mind in home waters, for they were faced with an urgent and intricate problem in more distant seas. The existence of Admiral von Spee's squadron left our overseas possessions and our great trade routes at the mercy of enemy raids. Till it was hunted down no overseas port could feel security, and the Australian and New Zealand Governments, busy with sending contingents to the fighting fronts, demanded not unnaturally that this should be made the first duty of the British Navy. Whether the squadron kept together or split into raiding units it was no light task to bring it to book when it had the oceans of the world for its hunting ground. Sooner or later it was doomed, and von Spee, hampered with difficulties of coaling and supplies, could only hope for a brief career. But during that career a bold man might do incalculable damage to the Allies and deflect and cripple all their strategic plans, and the German admiral was a most bold and gallant commander.

About the middle of August two of his light cruisers, the *Dresden* and the *Karlsruhe*, appeared in the mid-Atlantic, while the *Emden*, as we have seen, harried the Indian Ocean. Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, in command of the North American station, took up the chase of the first two throughout the West Indian islands and down the east coast of South America. Meantime von Spee was somewhere in the Central Pacific, where at the end of September he bombarded Tahiti, and presently it became clear that the *Dresden* had joined him. His squadron now comprised two armoured cruisers—the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst*; and three light cruisers—the *Dresden*, *Leipzig*, and *Nürnberg*. The first two were sister ships, both launched in 1906,

with a tonnage of 11,400 and a speed of at least 23 knots. They carried 6-inch armour, and mounted eight 8.2-inch, six 5.9-inch, and eighteen 21-pounder guns. The *Dresden* was a sister ship of the *Emden*—3,592 tons, 24½ knots, and ten 4.1-inch guns. The *Nürnberg* was slightly smaller—3,400 tons—her armament was the same, and her speed was about half a knot quicker. Smaller still was the *Leipzig*—3,200 tons—with the same armament as the other two, and a speed of over 22 knots. This squadron set itself to prey upon our commerce routes, remembering that the British navy was short in cruisers of the class best fitted to patrol and guard the great trade highways. Von Spee moved nearer the western coast of South America, and found coaling and provisioning bases on the coast of Ecuador and Colombia, and in the Galapagos Islands. The duties of neutrals were either imperfectly understood or slackly observed by some of the South American states at this stage, and the German admiral seems to have been permitted the use of wireless stations, which gave him valuable information as to his enemy's movements.

So soon as definite news came of von Spee's whereabouts, Cradock sailed south to the Horn. He had in his squadron, when formed, the twelve-year-old battleship, the *Canopus*, two armoured cruisers, the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth*, the light cruiser *Glasgow*, and an armed liner, the *Otranto*, belonging to the Orient Steam Navigation Company. None of his vessels was strong either in speed or armament. The *Canopus* belonged to a class which had been long obsolete; her tonnage was 12,950, her speed under 19 knots, and her armament four 12-inch, twelve 6-inch, and ten 12-pounder guns, all of an old-fashioned pattern. Her armour belt was only six inches thick. The *Good Hope* was also twelve years old; her tonnage was 14,100, her speed 23 knots, and her armament two 9.2-inch, sixteen 6-inch, and twelve 12-pounder guns. The *Monmouth* was a smaller vessel of 9,800 tons, with the same speed, and mounting fourteen 6-inch and eight 12-pounder guns. The *Glasgow* was a much newer vessel, and had a speed of 25 knots. Her tonnage was 4,800, and her armament two 6-inch and ten 4-inch guns.

Cradock's instructions, received on 14th September, were to make the Falkland Islands his base and to concentrate there a squadron strong enough to meet von Spee. A week later it appeared as if von Spee had gone off north-west from Samoa to his original station in the North Pacific, where the Japanese could deal with him. It looked therefore as if Cradock were safe; so he was

ordered not to concentrate all his cruisers, but to attack German trade west of the Magellan Straits, for which task two cruisers and an armed liner would be sufficient. The news of the arrival of the *Dresden* did not seem to alter the situation. But on 5th October the Admiralty had information which suggested that von Spee was making for Easter Island, and Cradock was warned that he might have to meet the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, and consequently was ordered to take the *Canopus* with him. Cradock asked for reinforcements, and protested that his instructions were impossible, for with his small squadron he could not watch both coasts of South America. For some days, owing to bad weather and the pressure of other duties, there came no reply from the Admiralty. If von Spee escaped he might cripple our operations in the Cameroons, and might work untold harm in the troubled waters of South Africa. On 14th October Cradock was told to concentrate the *Good Hope*, *Canopus*, *Monmouth*, *Glasgow*, and *Otranto* for a combined operation on the west coast of South America, and informed that a second squadron was being formed for the Plate area. Cradock assumed that his former orders also held good, and that he was expected to bring the enemy to action. His difficulty was with the *Canopus*, which was hopelessly slow. On 22nd October he left the Falklands to make a sweep round the Horn, leaving the *Canopus* to join him by way of the Magellan Straits.

He had no illusions about the dangers of his task, for he knew that if he met von Spee he would meet an enemy more than his match. During these weeks weather conditions made communication with the Admiralty exceptionally difficult: he was not aware that an Anglo-Japanese squadron was operating in the North Pacific; and he seems to have regarded the charge of all the western coasts as resting on himself alone. In this spirit of devotion to a desperate duty he left the slow *Canopus* behind him, and with his two chief ships but newly commissioned and poor in gunnery, set out on a task which might engage him with two of the best cruisers in the German fleet. He may have argued further—for no height of gallantry was impossible to such a man—that even if he perished the special circumstances of the conqueror might turn his victory into defeat. For, in Mr. Balfour's words, "the German admiral in the Pacific was far from any front where he could have refitted. No friendly bases were open to him. If, therefore, he suffered damage, even though in suffering damage he inflicted apparently greater damage than he received, yet his power, great for evil

while he remained untouched, might suddenly, as by a stroke of an enchanter's wand, be utterly destroyed." \*

The opponents, Cradock from the south and von Spee from the north, were moving towards a conflict like one of the historic naval battles, a fight without mines, submarines, or destroyers, where the two squadrons were to draw into line ahead and each ship select its antagonist as in the ancient days. The *Glasgow*, which had been sent forward to scout, a little after 4 o'clock in the afternoon of 1st November sighted the enemy. She made out the two big armoured cruisers leading, and the light cruisers following in open order, and at once sent a wireless signal to the flagship. By 5 o'clock the *Good Hope* came up, and the *Monmouth* had already joined the *Glasgow* and the *Otranto*. Both squadrons were now moving southwards, the Germans having the in-shore course. The British were led by the *Good Hope*, with the *Monmouth*, *Glasgow*, and *Otranto* following in order; the Germans by the *Scharnhorst*, with the *Gneisenau*, *Dresden*, and *Nürnberg* behind.

We can reconstruct something of the picture. To the east was the land, with the snowy heights of the southern Andes fired by the evening glow. To the west burned one of those flaming sunsets which the Pacific knows, and silhouetted against its crimson and orange were the British ships, like woodcuts in a naval handbook. A high sea was running from the south, and half a gale was blowing. At first some twelve miles separated the two squadrons, but the distance rapidly shrank till it was eight miles at 6.18 p.m. About 7 o'clock the squadrons were converging, and the enemy's leading cruiser opened fire at seven miles. By this time the sun had gone down behind the horizon, but the lemon afterglow showed up the British ships, while the German were shrouded in the in-shore twilight. Presently the enemy got the range, and shell after shell hit the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth*, while the bad light and the spray from the head seas made good gunnery for them almost impossible. At 7.50 there was a great explosion on the *Good Hope*, which had already been set on fire. The flames leaped to an enormous height in the air, and the doomed vessel, which had been drifting towards the enemy's lines, soon disappeared below the water. The *Monmouth* was also on fire and down by the head, and turned away seaward in her distress. Meantime the *Glasgow* had received only stray shots, for the battle so far had been waged between the four armoured

\* Speech at the unveiling of Cradock's memorial in York Minster.



cruisers. But as the *Good Hope* sank and the *Monmouth* was obviously near her end, the enemy cruisers fell back and began to shell the *Glasgow* at a range of two and a half miles. That the *Glasgow* escaped was something of a miracle. She was scarcely armoured at all, and was struck by five shells at the water line, but her coal seems to have saved her.

The moon was now rising, and the *Glasgow*, which had been trying to stand by the *Monmouth*, saw the whole German squadron bearing down upon her. The *Monmouth*, refusing to surrender, was past hope, so she did the proper thing and fled. By ten minutes to nine she was out of sight of the enemy, though she occasionally saw flashes of gun-fire and the play of searchlights, for fortunately a flurry of rain had hidden the unwelcome moon. She steered at first W.N.W., but gradually worked round to south, for she desired to warn the *Canopus*, which was coming up from the direction of Cape Horn. Next day she found that battleship two hundred miles off, and the two proceeded towards the Straits of Magellan.

Cradock, out of touch with the Admiralty and perplexed by contradictory telegrams, could only "take counsel from the valour of his heart." He chose the heroic course, and he and his 1,650 officers and men went to their death in the spirit of Drake and Grenville. The Germans had two light cruisers to his one, for the *Otranto* was negligible; but these vessels were never seriously in action, and the battle was decided in the duel between the armoured cruisers. The *Good Hope* mounted two 9.2 inch guns, but these were old-fashioned, and were put out of action at the start. The 6-inch guns which she and the *Monmouth* possessed were no match for the broadsides of twelve 8.2-inch guns fired by the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*. The German vessels were also far more heavily armoured, and they had the inestimable advantage of speed. They were able to get the requisite range first and to cripple Cradock before he could reply, and they had a superb target in his hulls silhouetted against the afterglow of sunset. The Battle of Coronel was fought with all conceivable odds against us.

The defeat of Coronel played havoc with the British Admiralty's plans and dispositions, and left a hundred vulnerable spots throughout the Empire open to von Spee. Mr. Churchill and Lord Fisher did not hesitate; a blow must be struck and at once, and that blow must be decisive. The *Defence*, *Carnarvon*, and *Cornwall*

were ordered to concentrate at Montevideo, where the remnant of Cradock's squadron was instructed to join them. Jellicoe was summoned to lend his two battle cruisers the *Invincible* and the *Inflexible*, each with a tonnage of 17,250, a speed of from 25 to 28 knots, and eight 12-inch guns so placed that all eight could be fired on either broadside. Sir Frederick Doveton Sturdee, the Chief of the War Staff at the Admiralty, was put in charge of the expedition, with the post of Commander-in-Chief of the South Atlantic and Pacific. His business was to take over the ships at Montevideo and seek out von Spee should he attempt to break into the Atlantic by the Horn. If, on the other hand, the German admiral was aiming at the Panama Canal or the Canadian coasts, he would be dealt with by the Anglo-Japanese squadron in the North Pacific.

On 11th November Sturdee sailed, and on the 26th reached the rendezvous, where he found the *Carnarvon*, *Cornwall*, *Kent*, and *Bristol*. Von Spee after Coronel lingered for some time on the coast of Chile, waiting on colliers, and apparently also in the hope that the German battle cruisers might break out of the North Sea and join him. Then, finding that the Anglo-Japanese squadron was becoming troublesome in the Pacific, he steered for the Horn, which he rounded at midnight on 1st December. He was aiming at the Falklands, where he expected to find a weak British squadron coaling; he meant to draw it out to sea and destroy it, and then occupy the islands and demolish the wireless installation. As a matter of fact only the *Canopus* was there, and the little colony expected that at any moment the blow would fall. But on the afternoon of 7th December, Sturdee appeared with his squadron, intending to coal, and then go round the Horn in search of the enemy. The Falklands with their bare brown moors shining with quartz, their innumerable lochans, their prevailing mists, their grey stone houses, and their population of Scots shepherds, look like a group of the Orkneys or Outer Hebrides set down in the southern seas. Port Stanley lies at the eastern corner of East Island. There is a deeply cut gulf leading to an inner harbour, on the shores of which stands the little capital. The low shores on the south side almost give a vessel in port a sight of the outer sea. The night of 7th December was spent by the British squadron in coaling. The *Canopus*, the *Glasgow*, and the *Bristol* were in the inner harbour; while the *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, *Carnarvon*, *Kent*, and *Cornwall* lay in the outer gulf.

About daybreak on the morning of the 8th, von Spee arrived

from the direction of Cape Horn. The *Gneisenau* and the *Nürnberg* were ahead, and reported the presence of two British ships, probably the *Macedonia* and the *Kent*, which would be the first vessels visible to a ship rounding the islands. Upon this von Spee gave the order to prepare for battle, expecting to find only the remnants of Cradock's squadron. At 8 o'clock the signal station announced to Sturdee the presence of the enemy. It was a clear, fresh morning, with a bright sun, and light breezes from the north-west. All our vessels had finished coaling, except the battle cruisers, which had begun only half an hour before. Orders were at once given to get up steam for full speed. The battle cruisers raised steam with oil fuel, and made so dense a smoke that the German look-outs did not detect them. About 9 the *Canopus* had a shot at the *Gneisenau* over the neck of land, directed by signal officers on shore. At 9.30 von Spee came abreast the harbour mouth, and saw the ominous tripod masts which revealed the strength of the British squadron. He at once signalled to the *Gneisenau* and the *Nürnberg* not to accept action, and altered his course to east, while Sturdee's command streamed out in pursuit.

First went the *Kent* and then the *Glasgow*, followed by the *Carnarvon*, the battle cruisers, and the *Cornwall*. The Germans had transports with them, the *Baden* and the *Santa Isabel*, and these fell back to the south of the island, with the *Bristol* and the *Macedonia* in pursuit. The *Canopus* remained in the harbour, where she had been moored in the mud as a fort. At about 10 o'clock the two forces were some twelve miles apart, von Spee steering almost due east. The *Invincible* and the *Inflexible* quickly drew ahead, but had to slacken speed to 20 knots to allow the cruisers to keep up with them. At 11 o'clock about eleven miles separated the two forces. At five minutes to one we had drawn closer, and opened fire upon the *Leipzig*, which was last of the German line.

Von Spee, seeing that flight was impossible, prepared to give battle. So far as the battle cruisers were concerned, it was a foregone conclusion, for the British had the greater speed and the longer range. Ever since Coronel he had had a sense of impending doom, and had known that the time left to him was short. He saw, like the great sailor he was, that while his flagship and her consort were in any case doomed their loss might enable his light cruisers to escape, and that these could still do work for his country by harrying British trade. About 1 o'clock he signalled to the latter to disperse and make for the South American coast, while

he accepted battle with his armoured ships. His three light cruisers turned therefore and made off to the south, followed by the *Kent*, the *Glasgow*, and the *Cornwall*, while the *Invincible*, the *Inflexible*, and the *Carnarvon* engaged the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*. About 2 o'clock our battle cruisers had the range of the German flagship, and a terrific artillery duel began. The British armour-piercing shells from some defect in construction burst on impact, and this explained the long-drawn agony of the German ships, which remained afloat when their decks had become places of torment. The smoke was getting in our way, and Sturdee used his superior speed to reach the other side of the enemy. He simply pounded the *Scharnhorst* to pieces, and just after 4 o'clock she listed to port and then turned bottom upwards with her propeller still going round. The battle cruisers and the *Carnarvon* then concentrated on the *Gneisenau*, which was sheering off to the south-east, and at 6 o'clock she too listed and went under.

Meanwhile the *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Cornwall* were hot in pursuit of the three light cruisers, and here was a more equally matched battle. The *Dresden*, which was farthest to the east, had, with her pace and her long start, no difficulty in escaping. The other two had slightly the advantage of speed of the British ships, but our engineers and stokers worked magnificently, and managed to get 25 knots out of the *Kent*. It was now a thick misty afternoon, with a drizzle of rain, and each duel had consequently the form of a separate battle. The news of the sinking of the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* put new spirit into our men, and at 7.30 p.m. the *Nürnberg*, which had been set on fire by the *Kent*, went down with her guns still firing. The *Leipzig*, which had to face the *Glasgow* and the *Cornwall*, kept afloat, fighting most gallantly, till close upon 8 p.m., when she too heeled over and sank.

As the wet night closed in the battle died away. Only the *Dresden*, battered and fleeing far out in the southern waters, remained of the proud squadron which at dawn had sailed to what it believed to be an easy victory. The defeat of Cradock in the murky sunset off Coronel had been amply avenged.

The Battle of the Falkland Islands was a brilliant piece of strategy, for a plan, initiated more than a month before, and involving a journey across the world, was executed with complete secrecy and precision. Tactically it was an easy victory owing to Sturdee's huge preponderance in strength. The British gunnery was good, and the battle might have been won in half the time but for the British admiral's very proper desire to win without loss





(Facing p. 450.)



and return the battle cruisers intact to Jellicoe. Yet, when this has been said, it was a workmanlike performance, doing honour to all concerned. Technically, the sole blemish was the escape of the *Dresden*, which could not, however, have been prevented; for the speediest of the available ships, the *Glasgow*, had only 25 knots against the 27 which the German cruiser managed to achieve. The result had a vital bearing on the position of Germany. It annihilated the one squadron left to her outside the North Sea, and it removed a formidable menace to our trade routes. After the 8th of December, the *Dresden* \* was the sole enemy cruiser left at large, and she and the armoured merchantmen, the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* and the *Prince Eitel Friedrich*, were the only privateers still at work on the High Seas. The British losses were small considering the magnitude of the victory. The *Invincible* was hit by eighteen shells, but had no casualties. The *Inflexible* was hit thrice, and had one man killed. The cruisers suffered more heavily, the *Kent*, for example, having four men killed and twelve wounded, and the *Glasgow* nine killed and four wounded. Every effort was made by the British ships to save life, but in the circumstances most of the efforts were vain. The only sign of a lost vessel was at first the slightly discoloured water. Then the wreckage floated up with men clinging to it, and boats were lowered and sailors let down the sides on bow-lines in order to rescue the survivors who floated past. The water was icy cold—about 40 degrees—and presently many of the swimmers grew numb and went under. Albatrosses, too, attacked some of those clinging to the wreckage, pecking at their eyes and forcing them to let go. Altogether less than two hundred were saved, including the captain of the *Gneisenau*. Admiral von Spee perished, with two of his sons.

The victory was of supreme importance in the naval campaign, for it gave to Britain the command of the outer seas, and enabled her to concentrate all her strength in the main European battleground. Failure would have altered the whole course of the war in Africa, and most gravely interfered with the passage of troops and supplies to the Western front. It is worthy, too, to be held in memory, along with Coronel, as an episode which maintained the high chivalrous tradition of the sea. Let us do honour to a gallant foe. The German admiral did his duty as Cradock had done his, the German sailors died as Cradock's men had died, and

\* The *Dresden* was caught off Juan Fernandez on March 14, 1915, by the *Kent* and the *Glasgow*, and sunk in five minutes. The *Karlsruhe* had mysteriously blown up in the West Indies on November 4, 1914.

there can be no higher praise. They went down with colours flying, and at the last the men lined up on the decks of the doomed ships. They continued to resist after their vessels had become shambles. One captured officer reported that before the end his ship had no upper deck left, every man there having been killed, and one turret blown bodily overboard by a 12-inch shell. But in all that hell of slaughter, which lasted for half a day, there was never a thought of surrender. Von Spee and Cradock lie beneath the same waters, in the final concord of those who have looked unshaken upon death.



BOOK II.

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THE BELEAGUERED FORTRESS.



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE FIRST WINTER IN THE WEST.

The Winter Stalemate—The "War of Attrition"—Nature of Trench Fighting—  
The French Soldier—The British Soldier.

WE left the campaign in the West when the critical moment had passed. The thin lines from Nieuport to Arras had done their work, and by 20th November the tide of attack had recoiled and lay grumbling and surging beyond our bastions. A number of German corps were sent east to Hindenburg, and Foch was now at leisure to rearrange his lines and give some rest to the sorely tried defenders. The bulk of the British 2nd Corps and most of the 7th Division were already in reserve, and the 1st Corps followed, so that at the end of November, except for the 3rd Corps and the new 8th Division, portions of the cavalry, and the Indian Corps, the front from Albert to the sea was held by the French troops of d'Urbal's Eighth and Maud'huy's Tenth Army.

In those days, both in France and Britain, little was known of the great crisis now happily past. The French official *communiqués* gave the barest information, and the Paris papers could not supplement it. The English press continued to publish reassuring articles and victorious headlines; indeed, it was officially announced that our front had everywhere advanced on a day when it had everywhere fallen back. Hence, since the duration of the crisis had caused little anxiety, its end brought no special relief or rejoicing to the ordinary man. Soldiers returning on leave, solemnized by their desperate experience, were amazed at the perfect calmness of the British people, till they discovered that it was due to a perfect ignorance. There is a peculiarly exasperating type of optimism from which in those days our troops had to suffer. "I suppose we are winning hands down," said the cheerful civilian; and the soldier, with Ypres raw in his memory, could only call upon his gods and hold his peace. This conspiracy of

silence may have served some purpose in keeping nerves quiet, though the courage of the British people scarcely deserved to be rated so low; but in concealing from them the greatest military performance in all our history, it prevented that glow and exaltation of the national spirit which makes armies and wins battles.

Winter had now fairly come; and though modern war may affect to despise the seasons, the elements take their revenge, and both armies were forced into that trench warfare which took the place of the old winter quarters. The shallow shelter trenches of mid-October, hasty lines scored in the mud by harried men, became an elaborate series of excavations to which the most modern engineering knowledge on both sides was applied. At the same time, the enemy had to be kept occupied, and while the bulk of the Allied troops were employed as navvies and carpenters, the guns were rarely silent, and attacks and counter-attacks reminded the armies that they were at war. It was a period of temporary stalemate and quiescence, and therefore leisure was given to the Allies to perfect defences, to elaborate fresh schemes of attack, to train their raw levies, and to reconsider weapons and tactics in the light of their new experience. Germany for the moment had consented to a defensive war in the West, and even Falkenhayn, who was convinced that the decisive victory could only be gained on that front, bowed to an imperious necessity. The popular prestige of Hindenburg and the vigorous personality of Ludendorff focused German interests on the East. The absorption was justified, for the Eastern problem was urgent. Austria must be saved from final disaster, and the new allegiance of Turkey confirmed. Germany therefore resigned herself to holding the Western line with numbers considerably inferior to those of her opponents, trusting to her discipline and training, her greater skill in fortification, and her unquestionable superiority in machine guns and artillery.

The Allies were in no condition to institute an immediate offensive. The French since August had lost a million men, and were busy accumulating new reserves and labouring to increase their munitionment. The British losses had also been high, and were partly replaced by adding one Territorial battalion to each brigade—battalions which were presently to be organized in special Territorial divisions and to win fame not inferior to the proudest records of the old regular army. Munitions were still scanty, notably in the high-explosive class, and it was obvious that no serious offensive could be contemplated till the new factories



hastily improvised in Britain began to produce in bulk. But the First Battle of Ypres was scarcely over before the optimistic spirit of Sir John French set itself to devising plans for a new attack. He wished to attempt a turning movement by the Belgian coast which would gain possession of Zeebrugge. At first the British Cabinet were inclined to favour the scheme. The Admiralty was anxious to prevent the use of that coast as a submarine base, and believed that the Navy could support any advance effectively from the sea; while it was clear that Russia was in no very comfortable position, and that an offensive which should check the dispatch of further German troops to the East was desirable on every ground of loyalty and sound strategy. Lord Kitchener promised the regular 27th Division, and held out hopes of a great increase in Territorial battalions. But Joffre rejected the proposal. He was unwilling to put the British army in sole charge of the Allied left; he considered that a German offensive in the near future was likely, and was anxious for the safety of his front, especially in the neighbourhood of Roye and Montdidier; and he was developing a scheme of his own for a break through on the south side of the German salient at Rheims and on the west at Arras, for which he must accumulate all possible reserves. Presently the British Government also blew cold on the project. The old foolish fears of invasion revived in their minds; they did not see their way to supply the necessary munitions; they were unwilling to dispute the view of the French Commander-in-Chief. There was another motive: by the end of the year their thoughts had begun to toy with the idea of relieving the stalemate in the West by employing British forces in an altogether different theatre. The various objections alleged by London and Paris may, as Sir John French has argued, have been each capable of answer, but there can be little doubt that the decision was substantially right. Neither British nor French were as yet ready for a serious advance, and we may be very certain that an attempt to free the Flanders coast that winter would have been as costly and as futile as the various offensives of 1915.

The winter fighting was commonly described as a "war of attrition"—a *guerre d'usure*—but the phrase was a contradiction in terms. It was more correctly a period of waiting, a marking of time till further reserves in men and material were ready. But there was a positive side also to the Allies' plan. By frequent local attacks they kept the edge of their temper keen; they prevented the enemy from concentrating in force against any part of

their line ; they detained troops which might otherwise have been sent to Hindenburg. Their purpose was to be ready for any German attack, but to prevent it, if possible, by constantly worrying portions of the German front. The five hundred miles of the Allied line were held as to one-tenth by the British, and for the rest by the Belgians and the French. It ran from Nieuport generally west of the Yser, along the Ypres Canal, in a salient in front of Ypres, behind Messines to just east of Armentières ; then west of Neuve Chapelle to Givenchy, across the La Bassée Canal, east of Vermelles, west of Lens, to just east of Arras. From Arras it lay by Albert and Noyon to Soissons, east along the Aisne to just north of Rheims, from Rheims by Vienne to Varennes, thence, making a wide curve round Verdun, to the west bank of the Meuse opposite St. Mihiel, and so to Pont-à-Mousson on the Moselle. Thence it passed east of Lunéville to just east of St. Dié, ten miles inside the frontier. It reached the crest of the Vosges about the Col du Bonhomme, and then ran in German territory to Belfort and the Swiss border. In January a German comic paper published a cartoon in which two French staff officers were depicted measuring the day's advance with a footrule in order to make up their report. The jibe was not unfair, for the winter's record was a chronicle of small things—a sandhill won east of Nieuport, a trench or two at Ypres, a corner of a brickfield at La Bassée, a few hundred yards near Arras, a farm on the Oise, a mile in northern Champagne, a coppice in the Argonne, a hillock on the Meuse, part of a wood on the Moselle, some of the high glens in the Vosges, and a village or two in Alsace. But these minute advances had their moral value for the troops engaged, and even a certain strategical importance for the campaign. The enemy, as it happened, was in no position for a serious attack ; but, had he been, Joffre's policy must have seriously crippled his chances of success.

The tale of these months may be briefly told. In December there were attacks by the British on the Wytschaete ridge and at Givenchy, and by Maud'huy at Vermelles ; there was considerable activity in the snow-laden wood of La Grurie in the Argonne and on the crests of the Vosges. In January 1915 the Great Dune near Lombartzyde was taken, and for several weeks there was intermittent fighting around Cuinchy and Givenchy. At Soissons there was a more serious affair. The French—Maunoury's right—attacked and carried a hill north-west of Crouy, and three days later suffered a crushing counterstroke, which compelled them to fall back across the flooded Aisne, giving the enemy a mile of the

southern bank, and leaving a broad shallow wedge in their front. In Champagne, in the end of February, Langle de Cary with the French Fourth Army made a considerable advance, which pinned down certain German reserves destined for the East, and cost the enemy, on his own admission, greater losses than he had suffered in Masurenland the previous September. In February and March Sarrail made some small gains among the heights of the Woëvre, and a continuous struggle went on among the glens and ridges of the Vosges, with the result that, except for Hartmannsweilerkopf, every gun position on the slopes was held from Aspach to Gebweiler, and all the southern passes and crests were in French hands.

But the staple of the campaign was the day-to-day work of making and manning entrenchments. There were many observers at the time who saw in the trenches a final *reductio ad absurdum* of war, who, like Lord Nottingham in the campaigns of Marlborough, declared that a decision was now impossible, and that the Allies might fight to all eternity without result. Some such feeling was not absent from the mind of the British Cabinet when they began to hunt feverishly for possibilities of attack in distant theatres. But trench fighting is the oldest and most constant of the phases of war. One of the most critical of the world's battles, Alesia, was a trench battle, and Pharsalia was a consequence of the trenches of Durazzo. Napoleon knew that period of standstill in a campaign, when troops are forced into trenches, as at the Passarge in 1807, and before him Frederick the Great had worked out the philosophy of such a condition.\* In 1914 the trench-lines in the West represented the point at which the battle of movement had come to an end from exhaustion. They were different from those of Marlborough's day, because they were continuous and continuously manned, so that a break through was not possible without a fiercely contested battle. The trenches of Villeroi and Villars were dug to enable large territories to be held by relatively small forces; those of 1914 came into being because, since outflanking was out of the question, the opposing forces were too big for the battle ground. They were the natural refuge of large armies to whom mobility was denied.

When the position was first taken up trenches were shallow and rough, hastily dug with entrenching tools for a temporary shelter. But as the campaign developed and the line held, they were deepened, improved, and connected until they became a vast ramification of ditches and earthworks, defended with barbed

\* See his *Politisches Testament vom Jahre 1768*.

wire entanglements and every contrivance that human ingenuity could suggest. They were not a fixed position. Daily, like a glacier, they endeavoured to creep farther forward by means of sap and mine. Both sides burrowed towards their opponent's lines,\* and when successful a length of trench would leap into the air in a great explosion, there would be a rush of infantry, and a hundred yards of hostile trenches would be won, and, if the gods were propitious, held. If a party succeeded in getting into the enemy's trenches, their first task was to block the communication zigzags to prevent a counter-attack. Every night patrols would creep out into the No Man's Land between the lines, and occasionally fall in with an enemy patrol and rush it with the bayonet, while magnesium flares lit up the darkness, and the guns of both armies awoke. Snipers on both sides were busy all day from pits and prepared positions, and woe betide the unwary man who lifted his head above the ground. The devices of the eighteenth century campaigns returned. The Japanese had used hand grenades at the siege of Port Arthur, and bombs and grenades, bombardiers and grenadiers in the old sense took their places in our scheme of war. The Germans had for this task the better equipment, and the British soldier fought with bombs made out of jam pots, and every manner of improvisation, till scientists and manufacturers at home turned their attention to his new needs.

The true weapon against trenches was the artillery. There were first the ordinary field guns—the British 18-pounder, † the French 75 mm., and the German 77 mm.—with an effective radius of a couple of miles. Without an artillery “preparation” an infantry advance was folly, and the guns were used to damage the enemy's trenches, to keep down the fire of the enemy's field guns, and occasionally to bombard positions of importance behind the trenches. But field artillery was at some disadvantage in trench

\* Our underground warfare was not yet as elaborate as that at Marlborough's siege of Tournai. “Now as to our fighting underground, blowing up like kites in the air, not being sure of a foot of ground we stand on while in the trenches. Our miners and the enemy very often meet each other, when they have sharp combats till one side gives way. We have got into three or four of the enemy's great galleries, which are thirty or forty feet underground and lead to several of their chambers; and in these we fight in armour and lanthorn and candle, they disputing every inch of the gallery with us to hinder our finding out their great mines. Yesternight we found one which was placed just under our bomb batteries, in which were eighteen hundredweight of powder besides many bombs; and if we had not been so lucky as to find it, in a very few hours our batteries and some hundreds of men had taken a flight into the air.” (*Daily Courant*, August 20, 1709, quoted in Mr. Fortescue's *History of the British Army*, I., p. 514.) We were to repeat this kind of exploit two years later at Messines and elsewhere.

† About 84 mm.



warfare, as compared with its use in a manœuvre battle against advancing infantry. With its flat trajectory, the ordinary field gun did extraordinarily little harm to men in trenches two feet wide. Shrapnel proved nearly useless, and the Allied guns took to firing, as far as their supplies permitted, high explosive shell with a percussion fuse. More important were the heavy guns—the 60-pounders and especially the field howitzers. The immense power of the shell and the fact that it fell from a high angle enabled them literally to destroy the trench which they succeeded in hitting. Again, they had an ordinary range of four to five miles, and this allowed them to be emplaced well to the rear out of any danger from the enemy, unless one of his own howitzers got their range. The heavy guns played a vital part in trench warfare, and most of the advances were due to their preliminary bombardment. That they did not play a greater part was owing to the difficulties under which they were operated. With trenches close up to each other—in many cases not forty yards off, in some cases scarcely a dozen—it was a risky matter for artillery to bombard the enemy, for the slightest shortage in the flight of a shell caused devastation among their own men.

The discomforts of trench warfare can never be removed; at the best they can be mitigated. In the early days, before 20th November, when regiments were cooped up with their dead for a fortnight under constant fire in shallow mud-holes, the misery of it beggared description. As the first violence of the attack ebbed and the Allies were given leisure to revise their trenches, many improvements were introduced, battalions were more frequently relieved, and the whole system was regularized. The strain and the *ennui* of the work remained, but the physical hardships grew lighter, the trenches were lined and drained, and the communication network was perfected. The British food supplies were excellent: good feeding will go down to history as a tradition of this army in Flanders, like hard swearing in the case of an earlier expedition. Frequent reliefs and better provision for billets and baths in the rear did much to ease their lot. A battalion which came out of the trenches weary, lame, dishevelled, spiritless, and indescribably dirty, would be restored in a couple of days to a reasonable smartness and good humour. Perhaps the officers in those months had the hardest task. For them war justified its old definition: "Months of acute boredom punctuated by moments of acute fear."

The worst part of the business was the wet, and this was chiefly

felt in the north. A dripping winter and the presence of a million men churned West Flanders into a gigantic mud-hole. Some parts of the Allied line were better than others. The Arras district was fairly dry ; so was the Klein Zillebeke ridge and the country round Messines and Wytschaete ; while in the Ploegsteert Wood—a stretch about two miles long by one mile wide—a reasonably comfortable forest colony was established, where men could move about with a certain freedom. But all along the Lys and the Ypres Canal the trenches were liable to constant flooding, and the approaches were seas of mire. It was worse still between Dixmude and the sea, where life became merely amphibious. Tons of wood laid for pathways disappeared in the sloughs. A false step on a dark night meant a descent into a quagmire, from which a man, if happily rescued by his fellows, emerged, as Trinculo said of Caliban, “ No fish, but an islander that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt.” The Lys overflowed its banks, and inundated our trenches for eighty yards on each side. A brook at Festubert came down in flood, and several men in the neighbouring trenches were drowned. But far worse than any risk to life was the misery of standing for hours up to the waist in icy water, of having every pore of the skin impregnated with mud, of finding the walls of a trench dissolving in slimy torrents while rifles jammed, clothes rotted, and feet were frost-bitten. It was a lesson in the extremes to which human endurance could go. But so efficient was the commissariat work, and so ample the provision of comforts and warm clothes, that the British sick rate was no more than 3 per cent., lower than that of many garrison towns in peace, and inconceivably lower than that of any war of the past.

The winter was a period of excessive busyness both at the front and at home. In Britain and in the rural areas of France new levies were being trained with a speed which a year before would have been considered impossible ; every factory and laboratory was busy devising and manufacturing new weapons ; and, since to most men the war was still an adventure full of hope and the chance of glory, there was as yet little slackness and weariness. Staffs were working out new tactical problems against an advance in the spring ; and even the Governments, who had the chance to appreciate more correctly the situation, were in a mood of irrational optimism, rarely shot with misgivings. Such a mood did not lend itself to that serious thinking ahead and that disentanglement of the true guide-ropes of the problem which were the clamorous needs of the hour. Few men gave thought to the

real weakness of the Allied position—that a batch of governments united in a loose alliance was confronted by an enemy whose efforts were directed by a single brain and will. The problem at the moment seemed to be how to develop the latent resources of France and the British Empire, not how to use them, when developed, to the best purpose. There was, therefore, greater progress made in the creation of weapons and the development of minor tactics than in working out the major conceptions of strategy. Yet in the former sphere it is right to acknowledge the magnitude and earnestness of the work. The foundations were being laid for that immense munitionment and those new armies which did not appear fully in the field till 1916. In the dominion of the air the Allies were rapidly drawing ahead. France had led the way in experiment, and her Government between 1909 and 1914 acquired the largest air fleet in the world. Germany had at first preferred to interest herself rather in airships than in airplanes, but her military advisers were well aware of the latter's value, and had prepared a strong corps. The German aviator was especially trained to reconnaissance work and the task of range-finding for the guns, and abundantly proved his value in the first weeks of war. The British Air Service, the last to be started, had been so wisely and energetically developed by Sir David Henderson and his colleagues that in many respects it was the best equipped of all. It contained a military and a naval wing, and to the latter fell most of the destructive work during the winter, when Düsseldorf, Cologne, Friedrichshafen, and other places were visited; and on Christmas Day a raid was made on the shore defences and Zeppelin sheds at Cuxhaven.

Meantime, the slow process went on of the growth of understanding and good feeling between the Allied armies. France and Britain were given the chance of studying each other at close quarters under the sternest of all trials, and respect sprang up in the heart of each for the other's idiosyncrasies. The ordinary Frenchman was avowedly bored with politics. In no country, perhaps, is the politician, however sterling his virtues, very generally loved. His rewards are so large and immediate, the qualities which lead to a popular success may be so trivial, that he gets little sincere admiration except from those engaged, or desirous of being engaged, in the same line of business. But in France this aloofness from politics had led not only to a profound distrust of all politicians, but to a certain callousness about the work of government. If a hundred men in Britain, chosen at random,

had been asked to name the figures they admired in the past half-century, ninety at least would have mentioned no politician; in France, probably the whole hundred would have produced a list untainted by politics. But in war—war for dear life—all was changed. The State was no longer a knot of bungling officials with long tongues and deep pockets, but France, the lovely and eternal. Forgotten tales and traditions, old fragments of nursery rhymes, the dreams and emotions of boyhood, the memory of kin and home and friends, were fused in a conception of France as a mother to die for, a queen to strive for, a goddess whom the humblest felt for “as a lover and a child.” Such is the happy gift of the French people. They may seem steeped in anti-nationalism, distracted with narrow class interests, sunk deep in matter, when suddenly the guns speak, and there awakes a tempestuous affection, as simple as Joan of Arc’s, as splendid as the dream of a crusader. It is another privilege of the race that they are not afraid of heroics. They believe in doing fine things finely, with the grand air. They have no self-consciousness. War is a new world where familiar conventions do not apply, and they rise to the height of its novelty. The *Marseillaise* becomes not an ordinary marching tune but a psalm of battle; the tricolour is not a flag but the Ark of the Covenant; war is a high adventure, and the man who in normal times sold haberdashery in the Rue de Rivoli trailed a rifle in the Argonne woods with a wild poetry in his head. Again and again we find a touch of noble rhetoric in their deeds and speeches. They were gay after the traditional French manner, but it was not the stolid gaiety of good health and spirits, but a sister to fierce anger and first cousin to tears. For all the ranks of France the war was a crusade, and they moved to it with a consciousness of destiny, and with the high seriousness of Raymond before the walls of Jerusalem. Some day a poet will arise to sing of these new armies of the Republic. They were different from any that had gone before, different from Napoleon’s troops intoxicated with dreams of glory, or the puzzled levies of 1870. They were an armed nation, with every class and condition in their ranks. The easy *camaraderie* of peace time between man and officer gave way to a stern self-imposed discipline and a passionate loyalty to their leaders. In these leaders we find republican dignity at its best. The heroics of France were in the soul, and world-famous army commanders were scarcely to be distinguished in dress and mode of living from the ordinary man. The land had found what Cromwell sought, the “plain russet-



coat captain who knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows."

The British soldier was psychologically a world apart. In normal times he was more political than the Frenchman, more interested in his Government, and he had perhaps a more ready consciousness of the nation as something above and beyond ordinary things. He was always prepared to back his own side, as he would do in a football match; and "his own side," though he never tried to define it, was in a dim way a conception of Britain. Hence the war worked no very startling revolution in his point of view. He was a professional man-at-arms, and war meant simply a busy period for his profession and a good deal of overtime. He fought, therefore, partly out of professional pride, partly from a natural love of adventure, and partly from loyalty to his "side." I speak of the British regular, and what I have written did not apply in the same degree to the Territorials, or to the new service battalions formed after the outbreak of war, in which many men enlisted solely from motives of duty and patriotism, and which had more affinities with a national army such as the French. The British regular went to war as a matter of everyday business, and he considered it his duty to turn the most desperate affair into something homely and familiar. War was not to him a new world, and he did not see why because of it he should forgo his ordinary tastes and habits. So we find him under heavy fire discussing hotly the merits of his favourite football team, and playing games in his scanty leisure, and diffusing over the whole ghastly business of slaughter the atmosphere of a placid English Saturday afternoon. He declined to make much of anything. While fifty miles from the firing line his letters might enliven his relations with accounts of horrors—how he had no candle, but was writing by the light of bursting shells; but when he got into the real business, he wrote that he wanted a new pipe, and hoped "that all are well, as this leaves me at present."

He was a hopeless puzzle to his enemies. Here was a being who seemed without seriousness, who never talked about glory or his country, who prided himself on professing a dislike for war, who behaved, when he was allowed, as if he were in a garrison town at home, and yet who proved resistless in attack and unshakable in defence. Was he merely a capable hireling, an efficient mercenary? If so, how by all the laws of history should he be able to stand against single-hearted patriots? The answer is that he was the best of patriots; but he was a Briton, and had his own

way of showing it. He was naturally shy of heroics. The German soldier went into battle with his songs about the Rhine and his Fatherland. The British soldier could not do that to save his life—he would have felt a fool or a play-actor; so, when he sang, it was a music-hall jingle or some doggerel of his own composition—the kind of thing he would shout himself hoarse over in peace. He was as fond of his home as any Rhinelander. The Highlander had in his memory the “lone shieling of the misty island,” the Irishman some thatched cluster amid the brown mosses of the west, the English countryman some village of the green south; but they did not talk about them, for talk would have spoiled their sacredness. They had found out the best device for keeping nerves steady in a nerve-racking war, and that was to pretend that the whole affair was nothing out of the common. “Cheer up, my lad,” said the sergeant to the anxious recruit in the trenches. “I’ve always ’eard as ’ow it’s the first seven years of war as is the worst.” The British regular’s fighting temper was set for seven years—more if necessary.

A campaign fought in this sober, practical spirit must be barren of legends. In Flanders, as they sang in the American Civil War, we were “tenting again on the old camp ground,” and with a more susceptible race we should have heard tales of grey-goose shafts in the air, and phantom knights on dim horses, and periwigged captains leading ghostly cohorts. The Russians in the East saw St. George with his great spear riding in their van. But any tales that came to be told were invented at home, for our army did not see visions. Scot and Irish and Welsh had alike come under the spell of a common Britishness, which is chary of speech and fancy. The British soldier is deeply humorous in war, and his character therein is precisely his character in peace. It is no high-strung gaiety, but ordinary good spirits and a talent for farce. He is profoundly inventive in language, with a gift of ridiculous nomenclature which takes the worst edge off his hardships. Humour and soundness of heart make up sportsmanship, and he is nothing if not a good sportsman. We see this in his attitude towards the enemy. He had none of that childish venom of hate which was officially regarded in Germany as the proper spirit in which to fight battles. He respected his opponents, and would allow no one to cry down their fighting value. “A bad, black lot, no doubt,” said a Scots soldier of the Germans, “but no the ones opposite us. They’re verra respectable men, and grand fighters.” The dreary business of trench warfare was relieved by practical jokes upon the enemy,

and much chaffing, to which he frequently replied in the same spirit. A famous Berlin clown in the German trenches occasionally went through performances amid the applause of both sides. A certain German sniper with a completely bald head was preserved by one battalion as a keeper preserves a rare hybrid, and when they were moved to another part of the front they left instructions to their successors that the old fellow was not to be killed. Outposts have always fraternized to some extent—they did it in the Peninsula and in the Crimea—and the close contact of the lines led to the extraordinary truce of Christmas Day. Possibly it was connived at by the commanders on both sides, for some of our trenches were nearly flooded out, and the Germans had much timbering to do. In the French part of the field there was little of this fraternizing. They had wrongs to avenge, too many and too deep for these amenities of war. Had the British been holding lines in the Midlands, with a wasted East Anglia before them, there would have been little inclination to exchange courtesies with the enemy.

The French and British tempers in war were the product of national character. Each was fine in itself, each had merits which the other lacked, each was omnipotent in certain forms of fighting, and the combination of the two in one battle-front was fortunate and formidable. In the essentials they were one, for behind the exaltation of the French lay a profound practical talent, and beneath the prose of the British attitude was a shining devotion. It rarely found expression in words, but Sir Francis Doyle's "drunken private of the Buffs," the troopers who went down with the *Birkenhead*, the marines of the *Victoria*, and a hundred deeds in this campaign were proof of its presence. From the letter of a young officer who fell in the October battles I take some sentences which put soberly, in the English fashion, this abiding impulse:—

"Try not to worry too much about the war. Units and individuals cannot count. Remember we are writing a new page of history. Future generations cannot be allowed to read of the decline of the British Empire and attribute it to us. We live our little lives and die. Some are given chances of proving themselves men, and to others no chance comes. Whatever our individual faults or virtues are matters little, for when we are up against big things we must forget individuals. Some will live and many will die. We cannot count the loss. It is far better to go out with honour than to survive with shame."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### RAIDS AND BLOCKADES.

*November 2, 1914—March 31, 1915.*

The Raid on Yarmouth—The Raids on Scarborough and the Hartlepoons—Battle of the Dogger Bank—Britain's Action as to Contraband—Germany declares a Blockade of Britain—Britain closes the North Sea—The Blockade of Germany.

THE war in northern waters now entered upon a phase which had few parallels in the conflicts of the past. An old dread took bodily form, and its embodiment proved farcical. Exasperated by failure, Germany cast from her all the ancient etiquette of war, and the result was that the law of the sea had to be largely rewritten.

The shores of Britain since the days of Paul Jones had been immune from serious hostile attentions. Very properly she regarded her navy as her defence, and paid little heed to coast fortifications, except at important naval stations such as Portsmouth and Dover. But the possibility of invasion remained in the popular mind, and was used as a goad to stir us to activity in our spasmodic fits of national stock-taking. Invasion on the grand scale was admittedly out of the question so long as our fleets held the sea; but a raid in the fog of a winter's night was conceivable, and became a favourite theme of romancers and propagandists. When the war broke out the menace was seriously regarded by the Government, and during October and November, when the German guns across the Channel were within hearing of our southern ports, steps were taken to protect our eastern coast-line. We needed every atom of our strength for the great Flanders struggle, and if a raiding party succeeded in occupying a stretch of shore, the necessity of dislodging him might gravely handicap our major strategy. Accordingly Yeomanry and Territorials entrenched themselves in the eastern counties, and had the dullness of their days enlivened by many rumours. Civilians were perturbed by the thought of how they should conduct themselves if their homes were violated, and



there was much activity in the formation of national guards, and a considerable increase in recruiting for the new service armies.

Late on the afternoon of 2nd November, eight German warships sailed from the Elbe base. They were three battle cruisers—the *Seydlitz*, the *Moltke*, and the *Von der Tann*; two armoured cruisers—the *Blücher* and the *Yorck*; and three light cruisers—the *Kolberg*, the *Graudenz*, and the *Strassburg*. Except the *Yorck*, they were fast vessels, making at least 25 knots, and the battle cruisers carried 11-inch guns. Cleared for action, they started for the coast of England, and early in the winter dawn ran through the nets of a British fishing fleet eight miles east of Lowestoft. An old mine-sweeping gunboat, the *Halcyon*, was next sighted, and received a few shots, but the Germans had no time to waste on her. About eight o'clock they were opposite Yarmouth, and proceeded to bombard the wireless station and the naval air station from a distance of about ten miles. For some reason or other they were afraid to venture farther inshore—probably they took their range from a line of buoys marked on the chart, and did not know that after the declaration of war these buoys had been moved 500 yards farther out to sea—so their shells only ploughed the sands and plumped in the water. In a quarter of an hour they grew tired of it, and moved away, dropping many floating mines, which later in the day caused the loss of one of our submarines and two fishing-boats. The enterprise was unlucky, for on the road back the *Yorck* struck a mine and went to the bottom with most of her crew. The raid was a reconnaissance, and a blow aimed at the *sang-froid* of Britain. The latter purpose miscarried, for nobody in Britain gave it a second thought. To bombard the beach front of a watering-place seemed a paltry achievement, when at the moment the opportunity was present to interfere with Admiral Hood on the Belgian coast. It would have been wiser had the authorities taken it more seriously, and issued instructions to civilians as to what to do in case of a repetition of such attempts. For, having found the way, the invaders were certain to return.

They came again on 16th December, when a thick, cold mist lay low on our Eastern coasts. Von Spee and his squadron had gone to their death at the Falkland Islands, and it behoved the German navy to strike a blow in return. The raiding force, which was under Rear-Admiral Hipper, commanding the battle-cruiser squadron, included the *Derfflinger*, the newest of the battle cruisers, and the *Von der Tann*. The *Blücher* was there,

and the *Seydlitz* and the *Graudenz*, and there were also at least two light cruisers present. Before daybreak on the 16th the squadron arrived off the mouth of the Tees, and there divided its forces. The *Derfflinger*, the *Von der Tann*, and the *Blücher* went north to raid the Hartlepoons, and the other two went south against Scarborough.

A few minutes before eight o'clock those citizens of Scarborough who were out of bed saw approaching from the north four strange ships. It was a still morning, with what is called in Scotland a *haar* on the water, and something of a sea running, for the last days had been stormy. Scarborough was entirely without defences, except an old Russian 60-pounder, a Crimean relic, which was as useful as the flint arrowheads in the local museum. It had once been a garrison artillery depot, and had a battery below the Castle, but Lord Haldane had altered this and made it a cavalry station. Some troops of the new service battalions were quartered in the place, and there was a wireless station behind the town. Otherwise it was an open seaside resort, as defenceless against an attack from the sea as a seal against a killer-whale. The ships poured shells into the coastguard station and the Castle grounds, where they seemed to suspect the presence of hostile batteries. Then they steamed in front of the town, approaching to some five hundred yards from the shore. Here they proceeded to a systematic bombardment, aiming at every large object within sight, including the Grand Hotel and the gasworks, while many shells were directed towards the waterworks and the wireless station in the western suburbs. Churches, public buildings, and hospitals were hit, and some private houses were wrecked. For forty minutes the bombardment continued, and it was calculated that five hundred shells were fired. Midway in their course the ships swung round and began to move northwards again, while the light cruisers went out to sea and began the work of mine-dropping. The streets were crowded with puzzled and scared inhabitants, and, as in every watering-place, there was a large proportion of old people, women, and invalids. At a quarter to nine all was over, and the hulls of the invaders were disappearing round the Castle promontory. They left behind them eighteen dead, mostly women and children, and about seventy wounded.

About nine o'clock the coastguard at Whitby, the little town on the cliffs north of Scarborough, saw two great ships steaming up fast from the south. Ten minutes later the newcomers opened fire on the signal station on the cliff head. Several dozen shells

were fired in a few minutes, many striking the cliff, and others going too high and falling behind the railway station. Some actually went four miles inland, and awakened a sleepy little village. The old Abbey of Hilda and Caedmon was struck but not seriously damaged; and on the whole, considering the number of shells it received, Whitby suffered little. The casualties were only five, three killed and two wounded. The invaders turned north-eastward and disappeared into the haze, to join their other division.

That other division had visited the Hartlepoons, the only town of the three which came near to fulfilling the definition of a "defended" place. It had a fort, with a battery of antiquated guns. It had important docks and large shipbuilding works, which were busy at the time on Government orders, and some companies of the new service battalions were billeted in the town. Off the shore was lying a small British flotilla—a gunboat, the *Patrol*, carrying 4-inch guns, and two destroyers, the *Doon* and the *Hardy*. About the same time as the bombardment of Scarborough began, the *Derfflinger*, the *Von der Tann*, and the *Blücher* came out of the mist upon the British flotilla and opened fire. The action took place on the north side of the peninsula on which Old Hartlepool stands. With great gallantry the small British craft tried to close and torpedo the invaders, but they were driven back with half a dozen killed and twenty-five wounded, and their only course was flight. The German ships approached the shore and fired on the battery. Then began the first fight on English soil with a foreign foe since the French landed in Sussex in 1690—the first on the soil of Great Britain since the affair at Fishguard in 1797. The achievement deserves to be remembered. The garrison of the battery consisted of some Territorials of the Durham Royal Garrison Artillery and some infantry of the Durhams. The 12-inch shells of the *Derfflinger* burst in and around the battery, but the men stood to their out-classed guns without wavering, and aimed with success at the upper decks of the invaders. For more than half an hour a furious cannonade continued, in which some 1,500 shells seem to have been fired. One ship kept close to the battery, and gave it broadside after broadside; the other two moved farther north, shelled Old Hartlepool, and fired over the peninsula at West Hartlepool and the docks. The streets of the old town suffered terribly, the gasworks were destroyed, and one of the big shipbuilding yards was damaged, but the docks and the other yards were not touched. Churches, hospitals, workhouses, and schools were

all struck. Little children going to school and babes in their mothers' arms were killed. The total death-roll was 119, and the wounded over 300; six hundred houses were damaged or destroyed, and three steamers that night struck the mines which the invaders had laid off the shore, and went down with much loss of life. The spirit in which the inhabitants of the raided towns met the crisis was worthy of the highest praise. There was dire confusion, for nobody had been told what to do; there was some panic—it would have been a miracle if there had not been; but on the whole the situation was faced with admirable coolness and courage. The authorities, as soon as the last shots were fired, turned to the work of relief; the Territorials in Hartlepool behaved like veterans both during and after the bombardment; the girls in the telephone exchange worked steadily through the cannonade. It should be remembered that we cannot compare this attack on the east coast towns with the assaults in a land war on some city in the battle front. In the latter case the mind of the inhabitants has been attuned for weeks to danger, and preparations have been made for defence. But here the bolt came from the blue—the narrow, crowded streets of Old Hartlepool were a death-trap, and the ordinary citizen was plunged in a second from profound peace into the midst of a nerve-racking and unexpected war.

Somewhere between nine and ten on that December morning the German vessels rendezvoused and started on their homeward course. They escaped only by the skin of their teeth. Before the first shell was fired word of the attempt had reached the British Grand Fleet. Somewhere out in the *haar* Beatty with his battle-cruisers was moving to intercept the raiders, and behind came half a dozen of the great battleships. But for an accident of weather the German battle-cruiser squadron would have gone to the bottom of the North Sea. But the morning *haar* thickened, till a series of blind fog-belts stretched for a hundred miles east from our shores. This lamentable miscarriage was due solely to the weather, and not to any lack of skill and enterprise on the part of our admirals. Our destroyers had been in action with the raiders before dawn; as late as 11.30 p.m. one of our cruisers was in contact with the German light force, and just after noon the enemy was sighted by our battleships. But as the trap seemed about to close the fog thickened, and Admiral Hipper slipped through. The German battle-fleet, which had followed the battle-cruisers, had turned for home early in the morning. The raiders returned safely to the Heligoland base, to be welcomed with Iron



Crosses and newspaper eulogies on this new proof of German valour.

On that same day the Admiralty issued a message pointing out that "demonstrations of this character against unfortified towns or commercial ports, though not difficult to accomplish, provided that a certain amount of risk is accepted, are devoid of military significance." "They must not," it was added, "be allowed to modify the general naval policy which is being pursued." The first was a pardonable over-statement, unless we interpret the word "military" in a narrow sense. These raids had a very serious military and naval purpose, which it would have been well to recognize. The German aim was to create such a panic in civilian England as would prevent the dispatch of the new armies to the Continent, and to compel Jellicoe and the Grand Fleet to move their base nearer the east coast, and undertake the duties of coast protection. The first was defeated by the excellent spirit in which England accepted the disaster. No voice was raised to clamour for the use of the new armies as a garrison for our seaboard. The second, though at first there was some natural indignation on the threatened coast, and a few foolish speeches and newspaper articles, had no chance of succeeding. In vain is the net spread in sight of the bird. The only result was that more stringent measures were taken to prevent espionage, that civilians were at last given some simple emergency directions, and that recruiting received the best possible advertisement.

Germany made much of the exploit, till she discovered that neutral nations, especially America, were seriously scandalized, and then she had recourse to explanations. Scarborough had been bombarded because it had a wireless station, Whitby because it had a naval signal station, Hartlepool because it had a little fort. Technically she could make out a kind of argument, and Hartlepool might fairly be said to have come within the category of a defended place. It was true that the fortifications were lamentably inadequate, but she could retort that that was Britain's business, not hers. But the real answer is that she did not aim at the destruction of military and naval accessories, except as an afterthought. The sea-front of Scarborough and the streets of Old Hartlepool were bombarded not because they were in the line of fire against a fort or a wireless station, but for their own sakes—because they contained a multitude of people who could be killed or terrorized. If Germany had the exact plans of the coast ports and of their condition at the time, as she certainly had, she knew very well

how far they were from being fortified towns or military and naval bases. She selected them just because they were open towns, for "frightfulness" there would have far greater moral effects upon the nation than if it had been directed against Harwich or Dover, where it might be regarded as one of the natural risks of war. Her performance was not a breach of a technicality, for it was only a logical extension of an admitted principle; but such a barbarous extension was in itself a breach of the unwritten conventions of honourable campaigning.\* The slaughter of civilians to produce an impression was one of those things repellent to any man trained in the etiquette of a great service. The German navy had been justly admired, but it was beginning to show its parvenu origin. Individual sailors might conduct themselves like gentlemen, but there was no binding tradition of gentility in the service, and, as in the army, those at the head disliked and repudiated any such weakness. The last word was with the Mayor of Scarborough. "Some newcomers," he wrote, "into honourable professions learn the tricks before the traditions."

The British casualties by sea, apart from the losses in battle, were not serious during the last months of the year, but on the first day of 1915 there was a grave misfortune. On the 31st of December eight vessels of the Channel Fleet left Sheerness, and about three o'clock on the morning of 1st January, in bright moonlight, the eight were steering in single line at a moderate speed near the Start Lighthouse. There was no screen of destroyers, and the situation invited an attack from submarines, several of which had been reported in these waters. The last of the line was the *Formidable*, Captain Loxley, a pre-Dreadnought of 15,000 tons, and a sister ship to the *Bulwark*, which had been blown up at Sheerness on 26th November. Some time after three she was struck by two torpedoes, and went down. Four boats were launched, one of which capsized, and out of a crew of some 800 only 201 were saved. The rescue of part of the crew was due to the courage and good seamanship of Captain William Pillar, of the Brixham trawler *Provident*, who in heavy weather managed

\* "Military proceedings are not regulated solely by the stipulations of international law. There are other factors—conscience, good sense. A sense of the duties which the principles of humanity impose will be the surest guide for the conduct of seamen, and will constitute the most effectual safeguard against abuse. The officers of the German navy—I say it with emphasis—will always fulfil in the strictest manner duties which flow from the unwritten law of humanity and civilization."—Baron Marschall von Bieberstein at the Hague Conference, 1907.

to take the inmates of the *Formidable's* cutter aboard his vessel. The misfortune showed that the lesson of the loss of the *Cressy*, *Hogue*, and *Aboukir* had been imperfectly learned. For eight battleships to move slowly in line on a moonlit night in submarine-infested waters without destroyers was simply to court destruction.

Early on the morning of Sunday, 24th January, Rear-Admiral Hipper, who commanded the German Battle-Cruiser Squadron, left Wilhelmshaven with a strong force to repeat his exploit of the previous month. The *Von der Tann* was still undergoing repairs, but he had with him the *Seydlitz*, in which he flew his flag, the *Moltke*, the *Derfflinger*, the *Blücher*, six light cruisers, one of which was the *Kolberg*, and a destroyer flotilla. To recapitulate their strengths: the *Derfflinger* had 26,200 tons, a speed of nearly 27 knots, an armour belt of 12 inches, and eight 12-inch guns; the *Seydlitz* had 24,600 tons, the same speed, and ten 11-inch guns; the *Moltke* had 22,640 tons, 25 knots, and ten 11-inch guns; the *Blücher* had 15,550 tons, 24 knots, and twelve 8.2-inch guns. Before starting Admiral Hipper took certain precautions. He enlarged the mine-field north of Heligoland, and north of it concentrated a submarine flotilla, while he arranged for Zeppelins and seaplanes to come out from the island in certain contingencies. His main motive, assuming that he encountered part of the British fleet, was to retire and fight a running action, and entice our vessels within reach of his submarines or the Heligoland mine-field. The same morning the British battle-cruisers, under Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty, put to sea. A hint of the German preparations had reached the Admiralty, and developments were anticipated. He flew his flag in the *Lion*—Captain A. S. M. Chatfield—a vessel of 26,350 tons, nearly 29 knots, and an armament of eight 13.5-inch guns. With him sailed five other battle cruisers: the *Tiger*—Captain Henry Pelly—28,000 tons, 28 knots, eight 13.5-inch guns; the *Princess Royal*—Captain Osmond Brock—a sister ship of the *Lion*; the *New Zealand*—Captain Lionel Halsey—18,800 tons, 25 knots, and eight 12-inch guns; the *Indomitable*—Captain Francis Kennedy—a sister ship of the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, which were in the Battle of the Falkland Islands. With the battle cruisers went four cruisers of the "town" class—the *Southampton*, the *Nottingham*, the *Birmingham*, and the *Lowestoft*: three light cruisers—the *Arethusa*, the *Aurora*, and the *Undaunted*; and destroyer flotillas, under Commander Reginald Tyrwhitt. Admiral Beatty's squadron completely outclassed Admiral Hipper's alike in numbers, pace, and weight of fire, and the Germans were

heavily handicapped by the presence of the *Blücher*, whose low speed of only 24 knots marked her out as a predestined prey.

The night of Saturday, the 23rd, had been foggy, and the destroyers, scouting east of the Dogger Bank, had a difficult time. Sunday morning, however, dawned clear and sharp, for the wind had changed to the north-east, and swept the mist from the seas. About seven o'clock the *Aurora*, Captain Wilmot Nicholson, sighted the Germans off the Dogger Bank, signalled the news to Beatty, and presently opened fire. Beatty steered to the direction of the flashes, and Hipper, who had been moving north-west, promptly turned round and took a course to the south-east. This sudden flight, when he could not have been informed of the enemy's strength, made it plain that the German admiral's main purpose was to lure our vessels to the dangerous Heligoland area. About eight o'clock the situation was as follows: the Germans were moving south-east in line, with the *Moltke* leading, followed by the *Seydlitz*, *Derfflinger*, and *Blücher*, with the destroyers on their starboard beam, and the light cruisers ahead. Close upon them were the British destroyers and light cruisers, who presently crossed on the port side to prevent their smoke from spoiling the marksmanship of the larger vessels. Our battle cruisers did not follow directly behind, but, in order to avoid the mines which the enemy was certain to drop, kept on a parallel course to the westward. The *Lion* led, followed by the *Tiger*, the *Princess Royal*, the *New Zealand*, and the *Indomitable*. What followed was an extraordinary tribute to the engineers. The first three ships could easily be worked up to 30 knots, but the last two, which had normally only 25 knots, were so strenuously driven that they managed to keep in line. Our leading ships had the pace of the Germans, and no one of our squadron was seriously outclassed, while the unfortunate *Blücher*, on the other hand, was bound to drop behind.

Fourteen miles at first separated Beatty from the enemy, and by nine o'clock he was within  $11\frac{1}{2}$  miles of the last ship. The *Lion* fired a ranging shot which fell short, but soon after nine, when the squadrons were ten miles apart, she got her first blow home on the *Blücher*. As our line began to draw level the *Tiger* continued to attack the *Blücher*, while the *Lion* attended to the *Derfflinger*. At 9.30 the *Blücher* had fallen so much astern that she came within range of the guns of the *New Zealand*, and the *Lion* and the *Tiger* were busy with the leading German ship, the *Seydlitz*, while the *Princess Royal* attacked the *Derfflinger*. The *Moltke*, first in the line, got off lightly, because of the smoke which obscured the target.



Our destroyers and light cruisers had dropped behind, but presently, when the German destroyers threatened, the *Meteor* and "M" division, under Captain the Hon. Herbert Meade, went ahead and took up a position of great danger in the very thick of the firing. The British gunnery was precise, shell after shell hitting a pin-point ten miles off—a pin-point, too, moving at over thirty miles an hour. It was not a broadside action, for the ships at which we aimed were stern-on. At first sight this looks like a disadvantage, but, in practice, it had been found to give the best results, and that for a simple reason. To get the line is an easy matter; the difficulty is to get the right elevation. In a broadside action a shell which is too high falls harmlessly beyond the vessel, because the target is only the narrow width of the deck. But in a stern-on fight the target is the whole length of the vessel, 600 feet or more, instead of 90.

By eleven o'clock the *Seydlitz* and the *Derfflinger* were on fire. The *Blücher* had fallen behind in flames, and was being battered by the *New Zealand* and the *Indomitable*. An hour later the *Meteor* torpedoed her, and she began to sink. The crew lined up on deck, ready for death, and it was only the shouts of the *Arethusa* that made them jump into the water. With a cheer they went overboard, and none too soon, for presently the *Blücher* turned turtle and floated bottom upwards. Our boats rescued over 120 of the swimmers, and would have saved more had not some German aircraft from Heligoland dropped bombs upon the rescue parties and killed several German sailors. The airmen clearly thought that the *Blücher* was a sinking British cruiser, and this may have been the basis of the preposterous tale of our losses which the German Admiralty subsequently published.

We return to the doings of the three leading battle cruisers. The German destroyers managed to get between them and the enemy, and under cover of their smoke the Germans made a half turn to the north, and increased the distance. Beatty promptly altered his course to conform. The destroyers then attacked at close quarters, hoping to torpedo, but the 4-inch guns amidships in the battle cruisers drove them off. Presently submarines were sighted, and Beatty himself saw a periscope on the starboard bow of the *Lion*. The flagship at this time was much under fire, but suffered remarkably little damage. Just before eleven, however, as her bow lifted from the water it was struck by a shell which damaged the feed tank. She had to reduce her speed, and fell out of the line. This accident had unfortunate effects on the

battle, which up to now had been going strongly in the British favour. Beatty had to transfer his flag to the destroyer *Attack*, and the charge of the pursuing battle cruisers passed to the next senior officer, Rear-Admiral Moore, whose flag flew in the *New Zealand*. The *Lion* moved away to the north-west, and in the afternoon her engines began to give serious trouble. The *Indomitable*, released by the sinking of the *Blücher*, took her in tow, and after some anxious hours she was brought safely into an English port. The *Attack*, meantime, followed hard on the battle cruisers, but it was not till twenty minutes past twelve that she overtook the *Princess Royal*, to which Beatty transferred his flag. He found that the squadron had broken off the fight and was retiring. The reason which led Admiral Moore to this step was fear of a German mine-field, but it would appear that the British squadron at the moment of turning was seventy miles from Heli-goland, and probably at least forty from the new mine-field which Admiral Hipper had laid. The consequence was that what might have been a crushing victory was changed to a disappointment. The British losses were few—ten men killed on the *Tiger*, four on the *Meteor*, and six wounded on the *Lion*; no British vessel was lost, and the hurt to the flagship was soon repaired. The Germans lost the *Blücher*; the *Derfflinger* and the *Seydlitz* were seriously damaged, and many of their crews must have perished. But such minor successes were little better than a failure when we were within an ace of destroying the whole German force of battle cruisers.

The Battle of the Dogger Bank is chiefly of interest as the first action where destroyers were employed to make torpedo attacks on capital ships. To Germany the result was a grave annoyance, which was covered by a cloud of inaccurate reports. Hipper was apparently not held responsible, but Ingenohl became the target of criticism. He was shortly afterwards removed from the command of the High Sea Fleet, and his place taken by Admiral von Pohl. Three weeks later the British First Lord of the Admiralty made a statement in the House of Commons which summed up the recent work of the Navy, and drew the attention of the nation to the lessons of the Dogger Bank action—the power of the great guns, the excellence of British gunnery, the immense advantage of speed. He pointed out that at five to four in representative ships the enemy did not think it prudent to engage; that, should the great fleets join in battle, Britain could put into line a preponderance both in quality and numbers far greater than

five to four ; and that this extra margin might be regarded as an additional insurance against unexpected preliminary losses by mines and submarines. The total naval losses, mainly by submarine, had been 5,500 officers and men.

“ For the loss of these British lives we have lived through six months of this war safely and even prosperously. We have established for the time being a command of the sea such as we had never expected, such as we have never known, and such as our ancestors have never known at any other period of our history.”

In the concluding words of this speech Mr. Churchill foreshadowed the possibility of further naval pressure against an enemy “ who, as a matter of deliberate policy, places herself outside all international obligations.” He referred especially to the imports of food, hitherto unhindered, and his prognostication was soon verified.

From the beginning of the struggle merchandise which was not contraband of war had been allowed to pass into Germany in neutral vessels. But on the 26th of January the German Government announced their intention of seizing all stocks of corn and flour, and forbade all private transactions as from that morning. This meant that grain had become a munition of war, for it was no longer possible to distinguish between imports for the civilian population and for the army in the field. Accordingly the British Government had to revise its practice. The American steamer *Wilhelmina*, laden with a cargo of foodstuffs for Germany, was stopped at Falmouth, and the case referred to the Prize Courts. In this policy Britain did not depart from the traditional principles of international practice. She did not as yet propose to seize non-contraband goods in neutral vessels. All that happened was that certain goods, which were normally non-contraband, were now made contraband by the action of Germany. The economic and legal bearing of these events will be discussed in the next chapter ; here it is sufficient to note the actual consequences. Germany, much perturbed by the unforeseen results of her declaration, attempted to modify it by announcing that imports of food would not be used for military purposes ; but such a declaration could not be accepted by Britain, for it was not possible in practice. Then in a fit of wrath Germany took the bold step of declaring war against all British merchandise—war which would follow none of the old rules, for it would be conducted by submarines, who had no facilities, even if they had the disposition, to rescue the crews. She further announced that from 18th February onward the waters around the British Isles would be considered a war region, and that any

enemy merchant vessels found there " would be destroyed without its always being possible to warn the crew or passengers of the dangers threatening." The sea passage north of the Shetlands and the costal waters of the Netherlands were declared to be exempt from this menace.

The " blockade " of Britain was not a blockade in any technical sense. Germany merely specified certain tracts of water in which she proposed to commit acts which were forbidden by every code of naval warfare. In 1806 Napoleon had issued an earlier Berlin Decree, in which he proclaimed the British Isles to be in a state of blockade. He could not enforce it, and British trade, so far from suffering, actually increased in the ensuing years. But Napoleon, though he used the word " blockade " improperly, sought his purpose by means which were not repugnant to the ethics of civilized war. Germany, utterly incapable of a real blockade, could only succeed by jettisoning her last remnants of decency. An inferior boxer may get an advantage over a strong opponent if he gouges his eyes. The German announcement not unnaturally gave serious concern to neutral nations, especially to America. Germany had warned them that neutral ships might perish in the general holocaust, and their anxiety was increased by an incident which happened on 6th February. The Cunarder *Lusitania*, which had a number of Americans on board, arrived at Liverpool flying the American flag. Such a use in emergencies is a recognized practice of war—one of Paul Jones's lieutenants passed successfully through the British Channel Flæet by hoisting British colours—and the British Foreign Office was justified in defending the custom. But clearly if it was made habitual it would greatly increase the risks of neutrals, and America had some grounds for her request that it should not be used " frequently and deliberately."

The next step of the British Government was to close absolutely to all ships of all nations the greater part of the North Channel leading from the Atlantic to the Irish Sea. Then on 1st March Mr. Asquith announced in the House of Commons that the Allies held themselves free to detain and take into port all ships carrying goods of presumed enemy origin, ownership, or destination. No neutral vessel which sailed from a German port after 1st March would be allowed to proceed, and no vessel after that date would be suffered to sail to any German port. It was not proposed to confiscate such vessels or their contents, but they would be detained. Thus tardily, in the eighth month of war, did Britain make use of her chief asset in the struggle, and reveal the para-



doxical spectacle of the greatest of the world's naval Powers waiting to declare a blockade of her enemy till her enemy had first proclaimed a blockade of her. Mr. Asquith's announcement implied the strict blockade of Germany, and was defended by him not as a fulfilment of, but as a departure from, international law upon the subject. It was, in his view, a legitimate retaliation against a foe which had broken not only every international rule but every moral obligation. Clearly it could not be an "effective" blockade in the strictest sense, but it may be noted that it was at least as effective as the blockade proclaimed by the North in the American Civil War, when a highly-indented coast-line of 3,000 miles was watched by only twelve ships.

Before 18th February, the day of destiny, German submarines had been busy against British merchantmen. They had succeeded from the beginning of the year in sinking eight, and they had been wholly unscrupulous in their proceedings, as was proved by the attack off Havre upon the hospital ship *Asturias*. By 24th February they had sunk seven more, by 10th March another four, by 17th March another eight, by 24th March another three, by 31st March another three. If we take the total arrivals and sailings of oversea steamers of all nationalities above 300 tons to and from ports in the United Kingdom during that period, we shall find that the losses worked out at about three per thousand. It was not a brilliant achievement. The mountain which had been in travail with awesome possibilities brought forth an inconsiderable mouse. The "blockade" hindered the sailing of scarcely a British ship. It did not raise the price of any necessary by a farthing. But it damaged what was left of Germany's reputation in the eyes of the civilized world, and it increased, if increase were needed, the determination of the Allies to make an end of this crazy international anarchism. Some of the commanders of the German submarines—notably Captain Weddigen, who lost his life—went about the business as decently as their orders allowed. Others, such as the miscreant who sank the *Falaba*, torpedoed the vessel before the passengers were in the boats, and jeered at the drowning. In the German navy, as in the German army, humanity depended upon the idiosyncrasies of individual commanders, for it had small place in the logic of her official traditions. It was a curious comment upon Baron Marschall von Bieberstein's proud boast at the Hague: "The officers of the German navy—I say it with emphasis—will always fulfil in the strictest manner duties which flow from the unwritten law of humanity and civilization."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ECONOMICS AND LAW.

The Main Economic Problems—British Measures—Strikes—Economic Position of France, Russia, and Germany—Problems of International Law—Rejection of Declaration of Paris—Mr. Balfour's Defence.

IF a great war is a packet of surprises for the strategist, it is not less so for the economist and the jurist. It is proposed in the present chapter to examine briefly some of the phenomena which at the outset appeared in the provinces of the two latter; and the task can scarcely be neglected, for they were vital matters to the civilian part of the nations concerned. War is fought with a weapon of which the steel point is the armies, and the shaft which gives weight to the blow the civilian masses pursuing their ordinary avocations. The lustiest stroke will miscarry if the shaft be rotten.

For a generation economists had prophesied that in a world war the dislocation of credit and the destruction of wealth would be so stupendous that the whole machinery of modern life would come to a standstill. Their prophecies were curiously wrong; not unnaturally, perhaps, for political economy is a bad ground for forecasts; it is not an exact science, except within the narrowest limits; it selects and abstracts its data, and its rules work strictly only in a rarefied and unnatural world. This war left the economist, if he were pedantically inclined, in a state of bewilderment. Wild heresies were applied, and worked sufficiently well. Deductions, mathematically exact, were falsified. Certain things which by every law should happen were never heard of. The jurist had surprises also, but of a different kind. He saw a stock of laws on which it seemed the world had agreed flung again into the melting-pot. He began to realize the dependence of law upon opinion, its malleability, the delicacy of its sanctions. For him it was a bracing experience and highly educative; for the more rigid type of economist it was a penance and a confusion.

War both complicates and simplifies the economic situation.

The ribs of the state show when the comfortable padding falls off. In examining the economics of the struggle we must first of all make a distinction between a country like Britain, where the normal life still in essentials continued, and a country like Germany, where everything, necessarily, was mobilized for war. Britain had all the world open to her, except the belligerent countries. Her factories were still working largely on private contracts; she was still exporting and importing, and paying for imports by exports. She was still the financial centre of the world, with relations with foreign bourses and banks, financing her Allies and her oversea dominions, with ships on every sea doing the carrying trade of other nations besides herself. Britain's economic problem, therefore, was rather complicated than simplified. She had to keep her ordinary life going, and adopt special measures to repair those parts of the mechanism which had been crippled by war. The same was true of France and Russia in a less degree. The one had universal service and the enemy inside her frontiers; the other had no trade outlets to the west during most of the winter months; but both were in touch with the outer world. Germany and Austria, on the other hand, were approaching the position of a beleaguered garrison. They could do no trade except with or through their adjacent neutrals, and every day the volume of this must diminish. What imports they got must be paid for by gold or foreign securities, for they had no exports. They must be self-sufficing and self-sustaining, and revert to the economy of the primitive state. Their problem was therefore greatly simplified. All the machinery of foreign bills and foreign exchanges and foreign debts or credits had stopped short. They had one great occupation—to provide out of their existing resources sufficient war material and sufficient food for army and people. So long as the nation was agreed, internal payments could be easily regulated, and paper money could be indefinitely created. If Germany were destined to win, the highest note circulation would be redeemed with ease. External payments did not trouble her, for there were none that mattered.

Let us imagine a case where a hundred men shut up fifty in a castle, and sit down to invest it. The besiegers will get their food from a wide neighbourhood, and must pay for it in cash, or get it on credit. They must keep up good relations with the people who sell bread and gunpowder, and be able to send to their homes and fetch what they want. They will live, in short, the ordinary economic life of the rest of the world. But the fifty in the fortress

are in a very different case. They cannot get out, and nothing can come in ; so they must use the food in the castle larder and the ammunition in the castle magazine, and make more if the castle garden is large enough to grow potatoes, and there is any stock of charcoal and saltpetre in the cellars. Their captain will have to take charge of the stores, and dole them out carefully. He will pay his men their wages from the gold he may happen to have with him, or more likely in promissory notes, to be redeemed when they are relieved or hack their way out to their own land. The economic problem which he has to face may be desperate and urgent, but it is simple.

The British situation represented the extreme antithesis to that of Germany. It developed on lines mainly normal in a world mainly abnormal. But at the beginning, when men's minds were uneasy, certain emergency measures had to be adopted, and throughout the war the State had to use, or promise the use of, its whole credit—that is, every stick and stone in the land—to strengthen weak spots in the line. *Salus populi suprema lex* was definitely the maxim, and the State became Leviathan in a sense undreamed of by Hobbes. The main tasks of the Government from the economic point of view were three: To ensure an adequate supply of food at reasonable prices ; to provide an adequate supply of cash and credit—largely a psychological problem, for if people are persuaded that all lawful obligations will be met as usual the battle is more than half won ; and to finance the war, which meant not only paying their own bills, but giving certain assistance to their Allies.

The measures taken to preserve the food supply have been already glanced at. Cargoes were insured at a rate which began at five guineas per cent., and fell in a month to two guineas. After the destruction of the *Emden* the rate fell back to little above that of peace time, and business resumed its ordinary channels. Hulls were insured through associations, the Government taking 80 per cent. of " King's enemy " risks. The report of one of the largest of these, issued on February 12, 1915, described the work done. Up to that date the losses paid on vessels insured with this association, during voyages started since the outbreak of war, were over £800,000, and the premiums received, £1,500,000. " From November," said the report, " members have been able in many instances to obtain in the open market rates below those fixed by the State, and therefore the amount insured with the association has been diminished." Again, a Cabinet Committee fixed maxi-



imum prices for certain articles of food, which, after various revisions, were abandoned as business became normal. The cost of living rose during the winter, and there were proposals for a further official price scale, which the Government after consideration rejected. In a speech in February 1915 the Prime Minister pointed out that the prices of certain foodstuffs, such as wheat, were fixed not in Britain but in America; that prices had not risen beyond the point attributable to the increased consumption of food at home owing to the new armies, the closing of the Dardanelles to Russian grain, and the lateness of the Argentine crop. A few minor steps were taken in this matter—such as a not very fortunate Government purchase of sugar, and a half-hearted attempt by the Board of Agriculture to increase and organize home-grown supplies of foodstuffs.

The second task—to assist credit, and therefore employment—involved a multiplicity of measures, only a few of which can be chronicled here. Distress was anticipated, and the Local Government Board made elaborate preparations for every possible contingency. Local relief committees were organized; £4,000,000 was authorized to be spent on building houses; the law of distress was altered so that landlords could not without special permission issue warrants for arrears of rent; and debtors were put in a favourable position. As it turned out, there was no distress to speak of. In most industries there was some scarcity of labour, and wages rose. In our ports, especially, the casual labourer became a rare and much desired phenomenon. With several millions withdrawn to the army from trade, the working classes that remained were in a condition of comfort and privilege. Another class of measures was concerned with the actual conduct of the war. The British railways were virtually taken over by the Government, and directed by a committee of general managers, wages being increased partly at Government expense. All armament firms worked exclusively for the Government and for the Allies, and their numbers were largely augmented by enrolling a variety of railway shops, motor-car factories, and engineering works for the same purpose. Most textile factories were busy on Government contracts, and in all areas where manufacturing was done for war purposes recruiting was stopped or curtailed. Squads of dock labourers had to be sent to the French ports to assist in landing men and supplies. But the demand for war munitions and the special measures taken for that end constituted almost the sole direct interference with British trade. Ordinary

manufacturers prepared goods for their ordinary markets with little hindrance except an occasional cessation of railway facilities and a great shortage of shipping.

The restoration of financial credit was undertaken with much boldness and success, and a laudable disregard of shibboleths and precedents. The moratorium and the measures to regulate bills of exchange have been described in an earlier chapter. The extravagant public finance of recent years had to some extent weakened British credit, and heroic measures—to be paid for later on the same heroic scale—were necessary. The Stock Exchange reopened in January, after an arrangement had been arrived at that the Banks should not call in their loans to stockbrokers till a year after the declaration of peace. It opened in blinkers, for severe restrictions were needed to prevent our enemies raising money by selling stocks in London through neutral countries. Speculation was made impossible, for a man could only sell stock which he actually possessed; minimum prices were fixed; all transactions were for cash, and there was no "carrying over." In order to conserve our financial resources, the Treasury, in the same month, announced that no fresh issues of capital would be permitted except with its approval, and that this approval would only be given when the undertaking was deemed desirable in the national interest. For the rest, by January 1915—apart from the deadness of the Stock Exchange—our financial machinery, while working at low power, was working naturally and normally. There was some strain between America and Britain, owing to the beginning of the war coinciding with the usual seasonal indebtedness of the New World to the Old. The New York bankers lodged £20,000,000 in gold at Ottawa on behalf of the Bank of England, and this was used to finance the heavy purchases of war material in the United States, and so redress the balance. In the same way an attempt was made to restore the financial equilibrium between Russia and Britain, and a credit for Russia was granted in London by an issue by the Bank of England of £10,000,000 Russian Government bills.\* Speaking generally, the winter showed the great strength and soundness of the British banking system, which had survived a stress which would have shattered

\* The exchange began by being enormously against Petrograd, owing to the difficulties of exporting goods from Russia. This made it practically impossible for Russian houses to liquidate their indebtedness to London. In the same way the exchange went heavily against Paris, owing to French purchases in Britain. The exchange was generally in favour of London, except in the United States, where the balance was considerably in favour of New York.

the credit of most nations. Incidentally it revealed the enormous power of the joint-stock banks, who had the right to call the tune. Holding £600,000,000 of the people's money, they were the main financiers of British trade.

The third task—to pay our bills and those of some of our Allies—was only begun during the first eight months of war, and it may haply be completed in the time of the grandson of the youngest child in Britain to-day. The loan of £350,000,000 raised in November—issued at 95 with interest at  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , and so virtually a 4 per cent. security—included a loan of thirty millions to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the loan to Belgium, and a small advance to Serbia. At a conference of the Allied finance ministers held in Paris in February, an arrangement was come to for partially pooling the Allied resources. Britain, France, and Russia agreed to take over in equal shares advances made to present and future allies, and to make jointly all purchases from neutral countries. It is needless to detail the various types of new taxation introduced in Britain and elsewhere. We were unfortunate enough to enter upon war with our normal war taxes—the income tax and the super-tax—already on a war basis. Britain was spending at the rate of something over £2,000,000 a day. It was estimated at this time by one statistician that a year of war on this scale would cost the British Empire directly and indirectly £1,258,000,000, which represented about one-fourteenth of the national wealth of Britain, and about one-twentieth of the total wealth of the British Empire.

Thus the economic position at the beginning of the spring of 1915 was that Britain continued her normal activities, slightly depressed in some quarters and enormously increased in others. Her commercial and financial mechanism was intact, but while most of her private industries went on, a considerable section was switched off to purposes directly connected with war. The one serious difficulty appeared in this latter sphere. Germany had calculated on various joints in her harness—civil war in Ireland, an apathetic Government, a people unwilling to recruit, and labour troubles. Only the last gave any colour of truth to her forecast. During February, in various districts engaged in the manufacture of war material, notably on the Clyde and the Mersey, strikes broke out, in most cases against the wish of the leaders of the Trade Unions concerned. For long discipline had been growing slack—even the self-imposed discipline of the Unions—and employers found too often that an arrangement with the men's representatives

was by no means an arrangement with the men. The British labour troubles gave great joy to the enemy, and much concern to the nation and its Allies ; for they hindered the manufacture of munitions, especially shells, on which the life of our armies depended. The troubles were an inevitable consequence of a system of private armament firms working under the same conditions as other businesses. At Creusot the men were soldiers, amenable to military law, and a strike was a mutiny, punishable in time of war with death. The British system allowed a workman, for the sake of another penny an hour, to jeopardize the lives of thousands of his countrymen, and to endanger the future of his country.

The blame for this preposterous state of affairs could not, however, be laid only on the workman's shoulders ; he in turn was a victim of national supineness, and his case was in some respects a strong one. Often he had tried to enlist, and had been sent back to make armaments. He had been compelled to work overtime—an unwise step forced by the Government upon employers, for protracted overtime weakens the efficiency of the workman, so that he actually produces less than in a normal week. He was tired, sulky, disappointed, and soon he grew overstrained. As he was making high wages he had a certain amount of spare cash, and it was unfortunately true that he often drank more than usual, and his whole nervous system deteriorated. It was easy to find grievances, and he had a certain *prima facie* case. Though he was earning big wages, he had to work hard for them, and he found the cost of living going up ; while he believed, with some reason, that his masters were earning profits utterly disproportioned to his increased pay. Again, he saw many of his Trade Union rules infringed owing to the exigencies of war. It did not matter to him that his Union leaders had consented to the change, for the workman as a rule is as suspicious of his leaders as of other people ; and he feared that presently he would be swamped with blackleg labour. For years he had been taught by demagogues that he had rights but no duties, and invited to embrace a policy based on stark selfishness. He was so much better than his mentors that when the crisis came he was ready as a rule to play his part, and enlist with his brothers and cousins. But when he was compelled to continue his ordinary work his sense of the gravity of things seemed to slip away. How could it be otherwise ? Almost every newspaper published flaming headlines daily, announcing some gigantic Allied success. He looked at the headlines, and did not read the obscure message from Rome and Athens on which they



were founded. When his friends came back from the front and shook their heads, he could only think that his friends had had specially hard experiences. Did not every paper tell him that the Allies were winning easily? Did not the wise and good proclaim "Business as usual" or "Victories as usual"? He believed in both, and business as usual naturally implied strikes as usual.

It was easy for the ordinary citizen to lose his temper with the strikers; but, in common fairness, it should be recognized that part of their case was sound, and that what was not was mainly the fault of their former teachers. Conscription and military law would have probably been not unpopular in the armament areas, for no sane man likes to be without discipline and leaders. The various steps taken by the Government to meet the situation might be described as tentatives towards this solution. The exceptional nature of the time was emphasized, and guarantees were given that the principles of the Trade Unions should not suffer. The movement towards Government control was still in its rudiments.

The economic condition of France and Russia was akin to Britain's, with reservations for the effect of a conscript army in withdrawing men from trade, and for their temporary losses of territory. Lille and Lodz in German hands were sections cut off from their industrial life to which we in Britain had no parallel. But for France all her foreign outlets remained, so far as they could be used, and for Russia the East was still open. Both showed astonishing recuperative power, their industries reacting to the stimulus of war. Russia was more or less self-supporting, save in respect of munitions, and her large gold reserve was for the moment sufficient to pay for her foreign purchases of war material. She financed the war by the issue of short loans, Treasury bills, and a loan redeemable in forty-nine years. She considerably increased taxation, for she had to make up a deficit in income of more than £84,000,000, caused by the prohibition of the trade in spirits. France after 15th December financed herself chiefly by Treasury bonds, which on March 12, 1915, according to a statement by M. Ribot, had reached a total of nearly £155,000,000. These bonds were rapidly taken up and distributed through all classes, and for them the peasant and the small tradesman brought out his store of gold from the stocking-foot. The revenue, which had fallen heavily down to October, began to recover with extraordinary rapidity. History had shown that no enemy dared to reckon on France's speedy exhaustion either in men or money.

Germany, as we have seen, was now in the widest sense a be-

leaguered city, and her economics were the economics of a fortress. By the end of 1914 she could not hope to receive any large quantity of foodstuffs or war munitions from abroad, and by March of the new year all imports ceased except from existing stocks held in Scandinavia, Holland, and Italy. Her problem was simply to organize the distribution of her domestic stocks, and to see that so far as possible they were replenished from home sources. New foodstuffs must be won from the soil, new supplies of chemicals and ore from the mines, as far as was consistent with the pre-occupations of war. Her task was one of internal production and administration. The financial side was simple. So long as the nation was confident, the credit of the State could be used indefinitely.

The harvest of 1914 had been poor; but at first the food question was little considered, since the public expectation was of an immediate and final victory. Apparently there was some miscalculation as to the amount of corn available, and in the autumn there was a good deal of careless waste. Early in the new year the German Government suddenly realized that the national supplies under this head were running short, and might vanish before the harvest of 1915 reinforced them. Accordingly elaborate provisions were made to husband the stores of flour. Municipalities were given the right to confiscate private stocks, the bakers became Government servants, and bread cards were issued which fixed the amount which the holder was entitled to buy. Bread became dear and bad. All the industries depending on grain were restricted, little beer was brewed, and pigs no longer could be fattened. Millers were compelled by law to mix 30 per cent. of rye flour with wheat flour before delivery, and the bakers were compelled to sell as wheaten bread a compound of this already blended flour and 20 per cent. of potato starch flour. Rye bread might be 30 per cent. potato. Such a shortage, however, was a long way removed from famine. Most foodstuffs in Germany were still cheap and plentiful. A dinner in Berlin in January did not cost more than a meal in London; only the bread was indifferent. Luxuries, as in all such cases, were more plentiful and relatively cheaper than necessaries. The future, however, was darkening. The harvest of 1915 must be a bad one, and the most meticulous thrift could not spread out supplies indefinitely. What was felt in January as merely an inconvenience might by July be a pinch, and by the winter an agony.

Most industrial stocks ran short, but they mattered little.

The grave question was that of materials which formed the bases for the manufacture of war munitions. Before the war Germany had consumed annually 785,000 tons of saltpetre, 16,000 tons of rubber, 1,100,000 of petroleum, and 224,000 of copper. In the last two cases there was some small local production—about 10 per cent. of the whole. She had also made large importations of nitrates. The Allied blockade cut off much of the saltpetre, all the rubber, and most of the copper, petroleum, and nitrates. War such as Germany waged, with its immense use of artillery and motor transport, was simply impossible without these materials. Some, such as petroleum, could be replaced to a certain extent by substitutes; nitrates could be chemically produced; and the large stocks of copper in private use could be drawn upon for a considerable time. But no substitute could be found for rubber, and this commodity was Germany's sorest need during the early months of 1915. The Allies at this time were inclined to exaggerate Germany's shortage of war material, and to underestimate the ingenuity of German scientists. But the pinch existed, as in the case of food, and in time would become a menace.

German finances during the war did not present any great difficulties to a well-disciplined State, provided—and the point was vital—that the people were confident of the ultimate issue, and that panic were avoided. Two credits for £250,000,000 each were voted before Christmas, and early in the new year another £500,000,000 was asked for. The money was raised by loan, and there was no increase of taxation. The Spandau war chest was early in the campaign added to the gold reserve of the Reichsbank, and it was maintained in Germany that these reserves, as late as February 1915, were scarcely touched. This may have been true, for Germany had had little reason, owing to the blockade, to use her gold. At the beginning of the war she contemplated the raising of a foreign loan, and an American firm was asked to place bonds to the extent of £250,000,000. This was found impossible owing to the refusal of the other New York banks to cooperate, and German war loans became wholly domestic matters. Nominally they were highly successful. They were fully and readily subscribed, and gave the Imperial Treasurer occasion for dithyrambic speeches on the financial resources of his country. By means of credit societies advances in notes were made on every kind of property; these notes were legal tender, and against them the Reichsbank issued its own notes. The general result was economically not very different from what would have been obtained

by a large increase of Government notes without gold security. It was a perfectly justifiable policy for a country situated as Germany was. She mobilized the internal credit of the nation as she had mobilized her armies. So long as her people looked for victory, so long they were justified in believing that indemnities and the spoils of conquest would readily liquidate all the obligations which the State had incurred towards them.

To sum up, it may be said that the Allies, owing to the command of the sea, conducted—under difficulties—their usual economic life; while Germany was almost wholly on a war basis, in spite of the fact that scarcely any German territory was in enemy possession, and large areas of French and Russian soil were in German occupation. Germany was short in some classes of food-stuffs and badly crippled in several forms of war material, but endeavoured to meet the first by a rigorous control of distribution and the second by the use of substitutes. The war finance of all the belligerents was a matter of gigantic loans, but the security differed. With the Allies it was a weakened, but in its main lines a normal, economic life; with Germany it was solely the prospect of victory and the fruits of victory. Defeat for Germany would mean a colossal bankruptcy. She had made all her assets a pawn in the game of war.

The questions of international law which arose in the early months of 1915 were in themselves so curious, and their importance in our relations with America and other neutrals was so great, that they demand some notice. In order to understand the situation we must realize the international practice at the outbreak of war. We may leave out of account the Declaration of London, for a coach and four had been driven through that unlucky arrangement before August was gone, and a handle was thereby given for Germany's charge that Britain had been the first to play fast and loose with international arrangements. Under the ordinary practice enemy's ships were liable to capture and enemy's goods on board to confiscation, neutral goods going free. Neutral ships could sail with impunity to and from enemy ports, and any enemy goods which they carried were exempt from capture unless they happened to be contraband of war. Contraband of war was anything which was of direct use to the enemy's fleets and armies. It included not only weapons and explosives, but materials which were capable of a double use, the latter being known as conditional contraband. In the Napoleonic wars conditional contraband was usually things like tar, hemp, and timber; later it became such



commodities as petroleum and copper. If conditional contraband was destined for an enemy port it was liable to capture in a neutral bottom. Food for the civilian population of the enemy was not contraband ; it might become so if destined for the enemy's soldiers or sailors, but this destination was obviously almost impossible to prove. Contraband, conditional or otherwise, was liable to seizure if it were assigned to a neutral port but could be shown to be destined for the enemy. These principles were fairly clear, but they involved a large number of questions of fact—such as the real destination of a cargo, and the precise ownership of a hull. Such questions of fact were decided by Prize Courts, which condemned or released the captured vessels submitted to them, and arranged for compensation, sale, and the other consequences of their verdicts. Prize Courts did not administer the domestic law of the country which appointed them. They sat, in Lord Stowell's famous words, " not to administer occasional and shifting opinion to serve present purposes of particular national interests, but to administer with indifference that justice which the law of nations holds out without distinction to independent states, some happening to be neutral and some to be belligerent."

Unhappily, while there may be agreement in peace on the main international principles, there is apt to be very little unanimity in war, for a Power puts the emphasis differently according as it is a neutral or a belligerent. A great maritime Power like Britain was subject to a special temptation. In her own wars she was apt to ride belligerent rights hard, for she desired to use her naval strength to destroy the enemy. If she was a neutral she pressed neutral rights to the furthest point conceivable, for she sought to get the benefit of her large mercantile marine. The United States, in their Civil War, were rigid sticklers for belligerent rights, while Britain pled the cause of neutrals. In this war Britain stood for belligerents, and they were the advocates of neutrals. If the situation had been reversed, and Britain had been neutral, undoubtedly she would have done as America did. There is a human nature in states as in individuals, and human nature is rarely consistent.

The first difficulty arose in connection with conditional contraband, especially copper. Germany needed copper, and she could only get it from foreign countries, notably America. Now, copper if shipped to Hamburg would be clearly contraband, and would be seized ; but what if it were shipped to Genoa or Bergen ? Suddenly the exports of American copper to Europe began to

grow prodigiously. In 1913, from August to December, the imports to Italy had been £15,000,000 ; in 1914 for these months they were £26,000,000. Scandinavia and Holland for the same period in 1913 had imported £7,000,000 ; in 1914 the figures were £25,000,000. This looked suspicious enough, for these countries were not in the enjoyment of an industrial boom, and such high copper stocks could only be meant for Germany. Britain's position was difficult. If she allowed them to land, Germany would get them. If she arrested them on the high seas, she had little or no evidence of a German destination to go on. She could only presume that, in the state of the Dutch, Scandinavian, and Italian copper trade, they must be destined for Germany. The consequence was that she adopted the doctrine of "continuous voyage," against which she had often made outcry in the past, and she pressed it very hard. That doctrine was first heard of in the Seven Years' War, and came to great notoriety during the American Civil War. When the North was blockading the South, Northern warships would discover a British merchantman bound for Nassau in the Bahamas with a cargo of rifles, or to Matamoros, just across the Rio Grande from Texas, with shells. These were war stores, and of no use to the quiet civilian ; and since Mexico and the Bahamas were not at war, the presumption was that the cargoes were destined for the Confederacy. Accordingly these innocent merchantmen were seized and condemned, after some highly interesting decisions by the United States Prize Courts. Britain protested vigorously, especially the lawyers, but the Government happily took no steps. When the Boer War came she showed some disposition to accept the American view ; for, since the Transvaal had no sea coast, contraband could only come by a neutral port like Delagoa Bay, and she stopped several vessels on this suspicion. Presently she had accepted whole-heartedly the American doctrine, and it was for the United States to repine at the consequences of their teaching. Indeed, she greatly improved on it. The Northern cruisers took only cargoes of absolute contraband where the presumption of enemy destination was un rebuttable. Britain took cargoes of conditional contraband, part of which might easily have been used by neutral civilian industries, and she defined conditional contraband in a way which played havoc with that Declaration of London which in early August she had proudly declared to be her guide.

The United States made a temperate protest on 28th December 1914, and Sir Edward Grey replied on 7th January with some friendly observations, pleading the *force majeure* of necessity, and

on 18th February with a long statement, setting forth the whole British case, referring to American usage in the past, and pointing out that, whatever our restrictions, America was prospering over the business. In this statement he outlined a far more startling departure from international practice than the seizure of American copper, and on 1st March a Declaration of the British Government expounded the new policy.

On 26th January, as we have seen, the German Government had announced the future control of all foodstuffs, including imports from overseas. This abolished the distinction between food destined for the civil population and that for the armed forces. "Experience shows," ran Sir Edward Grey's statement, "that the power to requisition will be used to the fullest extent in order to make sure that the wants of the military are supplied, and however much goods may be imported for civil use it is by the military that they will be consumed if military exigencies require it, especially now that the German Government have taken control of all the foodstuffs in the country." In these circumstances it was natural that Britain should treat as contraband of war all food cargoes for Germany, and for a neutral port if their ultimate destination was patent. Germany replied by announcing a blockade of Britain as from 18th February. British vessels or neutral vessels in British waters would be sunk by submarines without notice, and without any provision for the safety of crew and passengers. This threat was put into action, and on 1st March came the Declaration of Britain of a counter-blockade. The chief sentences of this Declaration may be quoted:—

"Germany has declared that the English Channel, the north and west coasts of France, and the waters round the British Isles are a 'war area,' and has officially notified that 'all enemy ships found in that area will be destroyed, and that neutral vessels may be exposed to danger.' This is in effect a claim to torpedo at sight, without regard to the safety of the crew or passengers, any merchant vessel under any flag. As it is not in the power of the German Admiralty to maintain any surface craft in these waters, this attack can only be delivered by submarine agency. . . . A German submarine . . . enjoys no local command of the waters in which she operates. She does not take her captures within the jurisdiction of a prize court. She carries no prize crew which she can put on board a prize. She uses no effective means of discriminating between a neutral and an enemy vessel. She does not receive on board for safety the crew of the vessel she sinks. Her methods of warfare are therefore entirely outside the scope of any of the international instruments regulating operations against

commerce in time of war. The German declaration substitutes indiscriminate destruction for regulated capture.

"Germany is adopting these methods against peaceful traders and non-combatant crews with the avowed object of preventing commodities of all kinds (including food for the civil population) from reaching or leaving the British Isles or northern France. Her opponents are, therefore, driven to frame retaliatory measures in order in their turn to prevent commodities of any kind from reaching or leaving Germany. These measures will, however, be enforced by the British and French Governments without risk to neutral ships or to neutral or non-combatant life, and in strict observance of the dictates of humanity. The British and French Governments will therefore hold themselves free to detain and take into port ships carrying goods of presumed enemy destination, ownership, or origin. It is not intended to confiscate such vessels or cargoes unless they would otherwise be liable to condemnation. The treatment of vessels and cargoes which have sailed before this date will not be affected."

Obviously this policy did not fulfil the conditions of a technical blockade, and the Government did not claim it as such. A complete effective blockade of Germany was impossible. Britain did not control the Baltic, and Sweden and Norway would therefore be in a different position from another neutral like America. Further, most of the German imports went through neutral ports, and to meet this difficulty Britain had gone far beyond the ordinary blockade. She had proclaimed the right to "detain and take into port ships carrying goods of presumed enemy destination, ownership, or origin." This was not the old "conditional contraband" and "continuous voyage" question about which she had been arguing with America before Christmas. It was a claim to capture enemy merchandise of the most innocent kind, even when carried in neutral bottoms—a wholesale rejection of the Declaration of Paris. Further, instead of presuming cargoes of conditional contraband to have an innocent destination unless a guilty were proved, she was compelled to presume guilt unless innocence were clearly made out, and the bias of presumption leaned heavily against the possibility of innocence.

These measures, which involved a very comprehensive rewriting of international law, were avowedly "reprisals" \* against Germany. Germany had crashed through the whole system like

\* "Reprisals" is a technical term in international law, and has been defined as "retaliation to force an enemy guilty of a certain act of illegitimate warfare to comply with the laws of war" (Oppenheim, II., p. 41). The main rules connected with them are: (1) that they should not be disproportionate to the offence committed by the enemy; and (2) they must respect the laws of humanity and morality.



Alnaschar's basket. Her methods of waging war, her treatment of civilian inhabitants in France and Belgium, her conduct towards prisoners, her laying of mines on the high seas, her sinking of merchant vessels and crews, her bombardment of undefended towns—the roll was damning enough to justify any reprisals. But the British measure bore heavily upon innocent neutrals, and it is fair to recognize the very grave inconvenience to which a Power like America was put. She did not know where she stood, and it is greatly to her credit that she recognized the novel situation created by German modes of warfare, and did not quibble about the letter of the law. The Allied Governments admitted the difficulty, and did not propose to confiscate the vessels and cargoes detained, unless they were confiscable on the normal grounds of contraband. Whether damages should be paid for detention, or the goods bought by Britain, was left to the Prize Courts and the executive officers. Germany in her blockade intended to sink neutral ships and sacrifice non-combatant lives. The British blockade involved no more than detention. The latter was therefore much less than a blockade, in which it is the custom of the captor to confiscate any blockade runners. As our blockade was technically incomplete, so the penalties we exacted were technically inadequate.

It is difficult to see what other course was possible. The British Government had the courage to frame a novel measure to meet novel conditions, and declined, in the Prime Minister's words, "to be strangled in a network of juridical niceties." Germany was out of court, and apart from the justification afforded by her recent conduct, the principles on which Britain acted had been approved by Bismarck, Caprivi, and Bernhardt. To neutrals, who had a real grievance, she defended her action on the ground of sheer necessity—a necessity which may override the technical provisions but not the eternal principles of international equity. If your opponent breaks the rules of the game it is impossible to remain bound by them without giving him an undue advantage, but an honourable man will not lower himself by adopting the baser kind of trick. She proclaimed a blockade which was not formally perfect according to the text-books, though it was not unlike that proclaimed by the United States in 1861; she justified its formal imperfections by the fact that she was fighting with an enemy who owned no allegiance to any law. Mr. Balfour, on 29th March, published a defence of her action, to which it was hard to see an answer. He asked what international morality required of

one belligerent when the other trampled international law in the dust. Clearly the policy of the first must be modified, and those who declared that the crimes of one party should in no way affect the conduct of the other confounded international law and international morality. The obligation of the second was absolute; that of the first only conditional, and one of its conditions was reciprocity. If a state lost all power to enforce obligations or punish the guilty, ought the community to submit tamely and behave as if social conditions were normal? Clearly not; and in the same way in the international world, where the law had no sanctions, if rules were allowed to bind one belligerent and leave the other free they would cease to mitigate suffering, and only load the dice in favour of the unscrupulous. "Let them [neutrals] remember that impotence, like power, has duties as well as privileges; and if they cannot enforce the law on those who violate both its spirit and its letter, let them not make haste to criticize belligerents who may thereby be compelled in self-defence to violate its letter while carefully regarding its spirit."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### TURKEY AT WAR.

October 29, 1914—February 8, 1915.

Turkey enters the War—The Turkish Army—The Question of the Persian Gulf—  
Britain occupies the Delta—The Campaign in Transcaucasia—The Battle of  
Sarikamish—Egypt—The Defeat of the Turkish Attack on the Suez Canal.

FROM the first day of war Germany had made certain of Turkey's alliance, and had treated it as a *fait accompli* in her negotiations with the Balkan Powers. In August it seemed indeed a certainty, but the German misfortunes of September had weakened Germany's hold on the Porte, save in the case of Enver and the army chiefs. Early in October it became clear that Enver and von Wangenheim were making strenuous efforts to force Turkey over the borderline, and on 29th October her many breaches of international etiquette, of which her behaviour in regard to the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* and her summary abolition of the Capitulations were the chief, culminated in definite acts of war. A horde of Bedouins invaded the Sinai Peninsula and occupied the wells of Magdala, and the combined German-Turkish fleet raided Odessa, sank and damaged several ships, and bombarded the town. On the 30th the ambassadors of the Allies had fateful interviews with the Grand Vizier. The Sultan, the Grand Vizier, Djemal, and Djavid were in favour of peace, but Enver and his colleagues overruled them. The Odessa incident was justified by a cock-and-bull story of prior Russian hostilities, and that evening Sir Louis Mallet, the British Ambassador, was instructed to present an ultimatum, demanding that within twelve hours the Porte should dissociate itself from those acts of hostility towards Russia, and should remove the crews of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*. It was certain that the Porte would refuse the second demand; but the question was not put to the test, for suddenly the Russian Government, without consulting its allies, declared war upon Turkey.

Nothing remained for the French and British Ministers but to ask for their passports ; and on 1st November Sir Louis Mallet, who had played a hopeless game with great skill and patience, left Constantinople, and the century-old friendship of Britain and Turkey was at an end.

The Turkish army was based nominally on a universal conscription, but in practice only the Mussulman population was drawn upon ; not all of that, indeed, for many of the Arab peoples were more usually opposed to than incorporated in the Turkish ranks. The conscript served for twenty years—nine in the first line (Nizam), nine in the active reserve (Redif), and two in the territorial militia (Mustafiz). The major unit was the army corps of three divisions, each division embracing ten battalions. The artillery, which had suffered severely in the Balkan wars, was patchy and largely out of date, though in recent months Germany and Austria had strengthened it with a number of heavy batteries. The peace strength of the army was, roughly, 17,000 officers and 250,000 men, and in war some total like 800,000 might have been looked for, provided equipment were forthcoming. The Commander-in-Chief was Enver, and the German Military Mission under General Liman von Sanders had practically taken over the duties of a General Staff. The German system of "inspections" had been instituted—four in number, with headquarters at Constantinople, Damascus, Erzringian, and Bagdad. The fourteen army corps were distributed in peace throughout the Empire at strategic points. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th were nominally stationed in Europe—at Constantinople, Adrianople, Kirk Kilisse, and Rodosto ; but they drew most of their reserves from Asia Minor. The 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th belonged to the Damascus "inspection" ; the 9th, 10th, and 11th were in Armenia and the Caucasus, the 12th at Mosul, and the 13th at Bagdad, while the 14th Corps had no territorial basis. On the outbreak of war these corps were reshuffled, six being concentrated around the Sea of Marmora. The Turkish infantryman had enjoyed for many years a high reputation as a soldier—especially, as he showed at Plevna, in a stubborn defensive. His physique was good, his nerves steady, and his power of endurance incredible. But in recent wars his fame had suffered a certain eclipse. He had been badly led and badly armed, the commissariat and transport had been rudimentary, and successive defeats were believed to have shaken his *moral*. Turkey's ill-provided levies in the past had fought desperately under brilliant officers, because they were inspired by a simple trust in their reli-



gion and their leaders and a genuine patriotic devotion. An attempt had been made to engraft upon this tradition the mechanical perfection of the German system. But the Turk was not meant by nature to be a soldier of the German type, and the seed of von der Goltz and Liman von Sanders was sown in barren soil. The consequence was a machine without precision and without motive power. The Turk had been at his best when he fought for Islam and the Padishah ; but Islam was inconspicuous in the ideals of the new Committee, the old Padishah was somewhere in exile, and the new one too patently a cipher. A perfect machine is a mighty thing, but an imperfect machine is so much scrap iron. The Turkish soldier was now an incomplete German, which was like a gun lacking the breech-block. It was impossible to withhold sympathy from a brave race going out to battle in a cause which they neither liked nor understood, from an army in the grip of an unfamiliar and imperfect machine, from a nation sacrificed to a muddled *Weltpolitik*. Disaster loomed large in its horoscope, but courage never failed it ; and the time was to come when the machine went to pieces, and, amid the snows of the Caucasus or the sands of the desert, the children of Osman, fighting once more in the old fashion, died without fear or complaint.

The beginning of war found Turkey with a curious strategical problem before her. Europe was the chief interest of her leaders. She hankered to recover the lost provinces of Thrace, and there she looked for her reward when her allies emerged victorious. But so long as Greece and Bulgaria remained neutral, there was no room for an offensive in Europe and no need of a defensive. Accordingly she was free to move the bulk of her corps to those frontiers where she faced directly the belligerents. The chief was Transcaucasia, where, in a wild cluster of mountains, she looked across the gorges at Russia. An offensive in Transcaucasia was what Germany and Austria urgently desired. Russia, they knew, had none too many equipped men, and a diversion on her flank would draw troops from that thin line, a thousand miles long, which she held from the Niemen to the Dniester. Against Britain, too, Turkey might use her armies with effect. An attack upon the Suez Canal might precipitate the long-expected Egyptian rebellion, and would at the least detain the Australian and Indian troops now training there, and at the best compel Britain to send out as reinforcements some of her still scanty reserves. Further, it would bar the short road to India, and give the flame of Indian insurrection time to kindle. A further chance of fomenting

Indian trouble, in the certainty of which Germany still firmly believed, lay in the scheme now coming to a head on the Persian Gulf. German agents had been busy among the Gulf traders, and elaborate preparations had been made for undermining the virtue of the Amir of Afghanistan, and for preaching a *Jehad* among the Mussulman tribes of the Indian north-west. Turkey believed that she had little to fear in the way of attack. The Russians were too busily engaged elsewhere to penetrate far west from the frosty Caucasus, while Britain had enough to do in Flanders without attempting an advance into Syria or Mesopotamia. The one serious danger-point in a war with a great naval Power was the Dardanelles; but Enver and his colleagues were confident that the penetration of these straits, long ago pronounced by experts a task of the utmost difficulty, had been rendered impossible for all time by the heavy guns which Krupp and Skoda had diligently provided.

The tale of the Dardanelles, the main episode in this section of the campaign, must be reserved for later chapters. For the moment we are concerned with the preliminary stages, when Turkey took the offensive in the Persian Gulf, in Transcaucasia, and in Egypt. In the first theatre the Allies had anticipated the events of 1st November, and the Ottoman troops found their attack forestalled by a British invasion. The Persian Gulf was one of the oldest of Britain's fields of activity. Englishmen, looking for trade, had visited it in the reign of Elizabeth; in its early days the East India Company established a factory at Bundar Abbas, and fought stoutly with Dutch and Portuguese rivals for the better part of two centuries. The Indian navy first began the survey of the Gulf, and looked to its lighting. For fifty years Britain had hunted down the pirates and cleared out their strongholds on the Pirate Coast. She protected Persia against those who would have deprived her of a seaboard, she policed the waters, she suppressed slavery and gun-running, she wrestled with the plague, and introduced the rudiments of sanitation in the marshy estuaries. For three hundred years she had done this work for the benefit of the shipping of all nations, since she claimed no monopoly and desired no prerequisites. All she took in return was a fraction of an island for a telegraph station. One thing, indeed, she asked, and that was a matter of life and death, on which compromise was impossible. No other Power should be allowed to seize territory, and no other flag should dominate those land-locked waters. For with her prestige in the Persian Gulf was

bound up the future of India and of the Empire. Before ever the Turkish crescent appeared in the Gulf, Britain had shown her flag there. In the sixteenth century Suleiman the Magnificent had captured Bagdad, but it was not till 1638 that the conquest was confirmed, and not till 1668 that Turkey reached Basra and the sea coast. For the next two centuries the writ of Constantinople had run haltingly on the western shores or not at all. The rise of the Wahabi threatened the Turkish power, and all through the nineteenth century Eastern Arabia was the scene of a rivalry between the great Wahabi houses of Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid—a rivalry in which the Khalif did not dare to interfere. At Koweit and at Bahrein lived independent sheikhs, and not all the efforts of Midhat Pasha could turn that coast into a Turkish province. The Gulf shores, baked and barren, and hot as a furnace, were a museum of types of incomplete sovereignty and *de facto* rule. But out on the waters lay British warships which kept the peace.

To this happy hunting-ground the eyes of Germany turned. Persia was a decrepit state, Turkey was moribund, and in Mesopotamia she saw a chance of finding a field for exploitation which would make it for Germany what Egypt was to Britain and Morocco to France. German professors told excited audiences that a thousand years ago the land had supported six million people, and that what had once been might be again. If Germany won a foothold on the Gulf, not only would she have the exploiting of Mesopotamia, but she would have weakened the British hold upon India. To secure this end Turkey must be conciliated, and the long tale of intrigue began which we have already noted. Her trump card was the Bagdad railway. In 1899 a German company, backed by the Deutsche Bank, had obtained a concession from the Porte to build a railway from Konieh, then the terminus of the little Anatolian railway, to Bagdad and Basra on the Persian Gulf. The concession was made valuable by a Turkish guarantee of the interest on the cost of construction at the rate of £700 per kilometre per annum. Britain awoke somewhat late in the day to the political purport of the new railway, and a diplomatic conflict began which was all but definitely settled at the outbreak of war. Germany had followed the practice of that Lord of Breadalbane who built his castle on the extreme confines of his land with the avowed intention of "birsing yont." Her "yont" was Koweit, on the actual Gulf shores, and she persuaded Turkey into various pretensions to suzerainty, which the watchful eyes of the British agents detected in time and frustrated. Mean-

time she was busy at the game of "peaceful penetration." A certain firm, Wonckhaus by name, played here the part which Woermann played in West Africa and Luderitz in Damaraland. A simple, spectacled gentleman in white ducks and a *topi* appeared on the beach in quest of pearl shells. From a modest shanty on the foreshore he directed his operations, and spent freely money which could not have come out of his profits. Presently arrived a German consul, and soon there were little tiffs between the employees of the shell merchant and the natives, which gave the consul something to do. Quickly the business grew, but not on commercial lines. Then came the Hamburg-Amerika line, playing national airs and dispensing sweet champagne, and the spectacled gentleman was revealed as its accredited agent. Very soon the innocent traders went concession-hunting, and called upon Turkey to ratify their claims under a pretence of suzerainty. Then Britain interfered, revealed the hollowness of the business, and put her veto on the game. But next week it began all over again elsewhere. Sir Percy Cox, the British Agent and Consul-General on the Gulf, had a task scarcely less difficult than that of Lord Cromer in the early days in Egypt, and he performed it with a patience, judgment, and resolution which deserved well of his country.

By the beginning of November the British in the Gulf were ready for the offensive. The Government of India had sent the Poona Brigade, under Brigadier-General W. S. Delamain, to Bahrein. On 7th November the force reached the bar of the Shatt-el-Arab, where the village of Fao, with its Turkish fort, lay among the flats and palm groves. The gunboat *Odin* bombarded the fort, and troops landed and occupied the village. The brigade then sailed thirty miles up the estuary, passing the refinery of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Abadan, and disembarked at Sanijeh, on the Turkish bank, where it prepared an entrenched camp, and sat down to wait for the rest of the British force. On the 11th there was some fighting with the Turks from Basra, and two days later Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Barrett arrived with the rest of the Indian contingent—the Ahmednagar and Belgaum Brigades, native troops with a stiffening of British regular battalions. On the 15th the disembarkation of the remainder began—no light task on the soft, muddy banks of the Shatt-el-Arab. Meanwhile Delamain with the Poona Brigade was busy with a force of 2,000 Turks, who held the village of Sahain, four miles to the northward. The action was meant only as a recon-



naissance in force, and Sahain and the date plantation beyond it were not entirely cleared. During that day the landing was completed, and on the 16th the British force rested. News arrived that the Basra garrison was advancing to give battle; and since there were Europeans in the city whose fate might depend upon a speedy British arrival, General Barrett ordered the advance for the early morning of the 17th.

Sahain was found to be deserted, and he moved on for nine miles to a place called Sahil, near the river, where was the main Turkish force. The ground was open plain, and heavy rains in the morning had turned the deep soil into a marsh. The fight began with an artillery preparation, both from the British field guns and from gunboats on the river. The Turkish fire was bad, but they were screened by a date grove, and the country over which the advance was made was as bare as a billiard table. The enemy did not wait for the final bayonet charge, but broke and fled. Pursuit was wellnigh impossible, partly because of the heavy ground, and partly owing to a mirage which screened his flight. The action decided the fate of Basra. On the 21st, while the bulk of the British force lay at Sanijeh, news came that the Turks had evacuated Basra, and that the Arabs had begun to loot the place. Accordingly General Barrett embarked certain troops on two river steamers, and ordered the rest of his forces to take the direct road across the desert. The Turks had sunk three steamers at one point in the Shatt-el-Arab, and had a battery to command the place; but after silencing the battery the river expedition managed to pass the obstruction early on the morning of the 22nd. About ten o'clock General Barrett reached Basra, where the Turkish Custom House had been set on fire, and the British flag was flown on the German consulate. The desert column, after a thirty mile march, came in about midday. Next day the British formally entered the city of Sindbad the Sailor.

During the remainder of the month Barrett was occupied in preparing a base camp. His position was secure, but it was certain that he would be subjected to further attack. The enemy had fled at Sahil, but he would return, and the great military station of Bagdad was little more than three hundred miles distant. Fifty miles above Basra, at the point where the former channel of the Euphrates joins the Tigris, lay the town of Kurna—a position now of less strategical importance than in former days, for the old Euphrates was of little use for traffic. Kurna was the point where ocean-going steamers could no longer ascend the river. On 2nd

December news came that the Turks had reassembled there, and next day a small force of Indian troops, with a detachment of the Norfolks, was sent upstream to deal with them, accompanied by three gunboats, an armed yacht, and two armed launches. Kurna proved to be a more difficult business than was expected. The British force landed on the eastern bank four miles below the town early on the morning of the 4th, while the gunboats went ahead, shelled Kurna, and engaged the Turkish artillery on the east bank of the Tigris near Mezera. Meanwhile the British column advanced, and about midday came abreast of Kurna, which was clearly held in force. Our men were subjected to a heavy fusillade, and since the Tigris was there three hundred yards wide and Kurna was screened in trees, they could do little in reply. Accordingly the commanding officer led his troops back to the original camp, which he had strongly entrenched, and sent a message to Basra for reinforcements. Nothing happened on the 5th, but on the 6th General Fry appeared with help. On the 7th he advanced against Mezera, which the Turks had again occupied, took it, and drove the defenders across the water to Kurna, while our naval flotilla was busy on the river. It was now decided to take Kurna in the rear ; so, early on the 8th, two battalions were marched some miles up the Tigris. A body of sappers swam the stream with a line, and with the aid of a dhow a kind of ferry was established, and our men crossed. By the evening the force was close to Kurna, entrenched among the trees north of the city. But there was to be no assault. That night Turkish officers approached the British camp downstream and asked for terms. General Fry insisted upon an unconditional surrender, and just after midday on the 9th the Turkish garrison laid down their arms. The British had now obtained complete control of the whole delta, and constructed entrenched camps at Kurna and Mezera on each side of the Tigris, to hold off any possible attack from the north. Turkish troops from Bagdad hovered around, and in January there were 5,000 of them seven miles from Mezera ; but they offered no serious attack. We had achieved our purpose, and established a barricade against any advance upon the Gulf which might threaten India.

Farther north on Turkey's eastern frontier the war was with Russia alone. A glance at the map will show that the Russian Caucasian border has on the south Persia for two-thirds of its length and Turkey for one-third. Since Persia was a negligible military Power, this meant that her north-western territory gave

each of the belligerents a chance of turning the flank of the other. The Persian province of Azerbaijan had, therefore, during the recent troubled years been occupied in parts by both Russian and Turkish troops, and when war broke out it was certain that this locality would be a scene of fighting. South of Lake Urmia the Turks took the offensive. A Kurdish force advanced by way of Suj Balak upon Tabriz, and meeting with no resistance from the Persian governor, took that city in the beginning of January, and moved some way northwards towards the Russian frontier. Russia, who had left no troops to speak of in Tabriz, soon repaired her omission, and having heavily defeated the invaders at Sufian, reoccupied Tabriz on 30th January 1915. In this unimportant section of the campaign we have to chronicle two other movements where Russia was the invader. Early in November a Russian column crossed the Turkish frontier from the extreme north-west corner of Persia, and occupied on 3rd November the ancient town of Bayazid, which lies under the snows of Ararat, on the great trade route between Persia and the Euxine. Other columns entered Kurdistan from the east, and a movement was begun against Van. Farther north, and fifty miles west from Bayazid, another Russian column from Erivan crossed the frontier in the neighbourhood of the Alashgird valley. The town of Kara Kilisse was taken, but the Turks —part of the Bagdad 13th Corps—showed a vigorous defensive, and held the invaders on the borders. The struggle died away towards the beginning of January, when the disaster in the Caucasus compelled a general retreat of the Turkish frontier guards upon Erzerum.

We come now to the more vital part of the Eastern campaign—the struggle in Transcaucasia, upon which Germany built high hopes and Enver expended all his energy. The main features of the district are sufficiently familiar. The great range of the Caucasus, which contains the highest of European mountains, runs from the Black Sea to the Caspian, blocking the isthmus much as the Pyrenees block the neck between the Bay of Biscay and the Mediterranean. South-west of the range is a huge trough running nearly all the way to the two seas. Here stands Tiflis, the ancient capital of Georgia, and through it runs the main railway of those parts, from Batum on the Black Sea to Baku on the Caspian. On the south-west side of the trough lies the mountain tangle of Transcaucasia, midway in which comes the Russian frontier. A railway ran from Tiflis past the fortress of Kars to a terminus at Sarikamish, fifteen miles from the Turkish border,

while another line ran from Alexandropol by Erivan to the Persian frontier. Erzerum, the Turkish fortress, stood about the same distance from the frontier as Kars; but it was on no railway, and had none nearer than five hundred miles. The mountain ranges extend north to the shores of the Black Sea, and south into Persia and Kurdistan. The whole district is one vast upland, most of the villages and towns standing at an altitude of 5,000 and 6,000 feet, and the hills rising as high again. All the passes are lofty, and in winter wellnigh impassable; none of the roads were good, and, as we have seen, there was no railway on the Turkish side, and but one that mattered on the Russian. Winter campaigning there was likely to be as desperate as Xenophon's Ten Thousand had found it. It was an old theatre of war since the days of Cyrus and Alexander, and whenever Russia and Turkey had faced each other it had been the cockpit of the struggle. There, in 1853, ShamyI led his mountaineers. There, two years later, Fenwick Williams held Kars against Muraviev in one of the greatest stands in modern history. There, in 1877, Loris Melikov and Mukhtar met, and Kars and Ardahan and Bayazid were the scenes of desperate conflicts. If Kars could be seized, the way would be open to Tiflis and the Caspian oil fields—perhaps even across the great Caucasus itself to the levels of southern Russia. To the leaders of a race which had always been famous as mountain fighters the offensive in the Caucasus seemed the easiest way of effecting that diversion which Germany had commissioned.

Enver's strategy was ambitious to the point of madness, but it was skilful after a fashion. He resolved to entice the Russians from Sarikamish across the frontier, and to hold them at some point as far distant as possible from the railhead. Then, while thus engaged, he would swing his left centre in a wide enveloping movement against Sarikamish, and with his left push round by Ardahan and take Kars in the rear. To succeed, two things were necessary. The force facing the Russian front must be strong enough to hold it while the envelopment was proceeding; and the operative part, the left wing, must be correctly timed in its movements, for otherwise the Russians would be able to destroy it piecemeal. It was this "timing" which formed the real difficulty. The swing round of the left must be made by a variety of mountain paths and over necks and valleys deep in snow, where progress in winter must be tardy and precarious. To time such a plan accurately was wellnigh beyond the skill of any mortal general staff.



For the Caucasian campaign Turkey had the 9th, 10th, and 11th Corps—stationed in peace respectively at Erzerum, Erzhingian, and Van—which had been concentrated at Erzerum about the middle of October. To reinforce the 11th Corps, the 37th Arab division had been brought up from the 13th Bagdad Corps. For the movement on the extreme left two divisions of the 1st Corps had been sent by sea from Constantinople to Trebizond. Turkey could obviously get no reserves in case of disaster. The nearest corps, the 12th, at Mosul, had gone to Syria, and the remainder of the Bagdad corps had its hands full with the British in the Persian Gulf. The nominal commander of the Caucasian army was Hassan Izzet, but Enver was present as the real generalissimo, and he had with him a large German staff. A German, Posseld Pasha, was appointed governor of Erzerum. The total Turkish strength was not less than 150,000, and they had against them the army of General Woronzov, which cannot at the outside have been more than three corps strong—say 100,000 men. Fighting began in the first fortnight of November, when the Russians crossed the frontier and reached Koprikeui on the Erzerum road, which after some trouble they occupied on 20th November. The time was now ripe for Enver's plan. The 11th Corps was entrusted with the duty of holding the Russian advance on Erzerum. The 10th Corps, at Id, was to advance in two columns over the passes by Bardus against the road between Kars and Sarikamish, with the 9th Corps wheeling between it and the 11th. At the same time the 1st Corps, which had landed at Trebizond, was to move up the Choruk valley, across a pass 8,000 feet high, take Ardahan, and advance over somewhat easier country to the railway between Kars and Alexandropol. The difficulty about the whole scheme was the roads. The only real way for an army through the Armenian heights was by the high trough in which lie Kars and Sarikamish, and thence westwards to the upper valleys of the Araxes and Euphrates. Everywhere else the paths were tracks, now blind with snow, and hopeless for artillery.

The Turkish offensive began about the middle of December. The 11th Corps pushed the Russians out of Koprikeui and forced them back a dozen miles to Khorasan, where, on Christmas Day, the retreat halted. The Russian army was now strung out along the thirty miles of the road from Khorasan to Sarikamish. Meanwhile, in desperate weather, the 9th and 10th Corps, forty miles north, had struggled over the high watersheds, and by Christmas Day had descended upon Sarikamish and on the railway east of

it. The 1st Corps, on the extreme Turkish left, was crossing in a blizzard the steeps at the head of the Choruk, and already looking down through the pauses of the storm on where Ardahan lay in its deep pocket of hills. If we take 28th December as a viewpoint, we find the Russian van held by the 11th Turkish Corps at Khorasan: the 9th Corps at Sarikamish: the 10th Corps east along the Kars railway, threatening to pierce the Russian front: and sixty miles north-east the 1st Corps descending upon Ardahan. It looked as if Enver's ambitious project had succeeded. But the attacking force was worn out, half starved, and short of guns and ammunition, for no transport on earth could cope with such a break-neck march. The Russian general dealt first with the 10th Corps. From 28th December to 1st January there was a fierce struggle on the railway, which, late on New Year's Day 1915, resulted in the defeat of the Turks and their retreat into the hills to the north. This withdrawal isolated the 9th Corps at Sarikamish, which was now enclosed between the Russian right, flung well forward in pursuit of the 10th Corps, and the Russian vanguard at Khorasan. That corps was utterly wiped out. Its general, Iskan Pasha, with all his staff, Turkish and German, surrendered after a gallant and fruitless stand. The Turks fought with their old stolidity till hunger and cold were too much for them, and they surrendered as much to the Russian field kitchens as to the Russian steel. Meanwhile the 1st Corps, which had entered Ardahan on New Year's Day, found that it could go no farther. On 3rd January a detached Russian force drove it out of the town, back over the ridges to the Choruk valley, whither the flight of the 10th Corps was also heading. The 11th Corps at Khorasan did its best to redeem the disaster. It could not save the 9th Corps, but it might cover the retreat of the 10th, and accordingly it pushed back the Russian van from Khorasan, and advanced as far as Karai Urgan, some twenty miles from Sarikamish. It achieved its purpose, for the pursuit of the 10th Corps was relaxed, and the bulk of the Russian army went westwards to reinforce the van. At Karai Urgan a three days' battle was fought among snowdrifts, and by the 17th the 11th Corps had been broken also, and, with heavy losses in men and guns, was retreating upon Erzerum. Meanwhile the 1st Corps and the remnant of the 10th were cleared from the Choruk valley by the Russian right, and driven towards Trebizond. The Turkish navy, which attempted to send stores and reinforcements by sea, was no more fortunate, for the several transports and provision boats were sunk along the coast by Russian warships.

So ended Enver's bold diversion. It had failed signally because his reach exceeded his grasp, as has happened before with adventurers. The three weeks of desperate conflict amid snow-drifts and blizzards—for the battlefields were scarcely less than 8,000 feet high—must have accounted for not less than 50,000 of Turkey's strength. Badly led and ill equipped, the starving Turkish levies had fought like heroes, and their sufferings were not the least terrible of the war. The Battle of Sarikamish—to localize the series of engagements—made certain that Russia for the present would not be menaced from the Caucasus. Turkey must look elsewhere to find the joint in the armour of the Allies. She sought it in Egypt and at the Suez Canal, which, as Moltke had long before told his countrymen, was the vital artery of Britain.

The story of Egypt is one of the romances of modern politics; and for its slow and varied drama the reader must consult the works of Lord Cromer and Lord Milner, the men who were the chief actors in the piece. In 1517, forty-eight years before the Turkish invasion of Europe spent itself on the fortifications of Malta and the gallantry of the Knights of St. John, the Sultan Selim acquired Egypt by conquest; and in spite of many vicissitudes, of the weakness of Turkish rule, the ambitions of Napoleon, and the boldness of Mehemet Ali, the suzerainty of Constantinople continued. The misgovernment of Ismail and the precarious position of the Egyptian bondholders brought in the Western Powers France and Britain, and a dual control was established over administration. Then came the deposition of Ismail, followed by the nationalist rising under Arabi, the bombardment of Alexandria, and the Battle of Tel-el-kebir. To Britain fell the task of restoring order, and that British occupation began which was the making of the country. There succeeded the menace from the Sudan, the devastating advance of the Mahdi and his fanatical armies, the loss of the southern provinces, and the death of Gordon. *Quae caret ora cruore nostra?* is more pertinent to Britain than to Rome, and the sands of the Nile have had the best of British blood. From 1885 onwards the task of the *de facto* rulers of Egypt was twofold—the reconquest of the Sudan, and the elevation of the Nile valley from bankruptcy to prosperity. The first was accomplished in 1898, when Lord Kitchener, at the battles of the Atbara and Omdurman, scattered the Dervish levies. The second, in the wise hands of Lord Cromer, progressed yearly, in spite of international

bickerings, Court intrigues, and a preposterous dualism in finance. In a multiplicity of problems there is usually, as Lord Cromer saw, one master question, the settlement of which involves the others. In the case of Egypt this was finance; and with infinite patience and perfect judgment the greatest of modern administrators first of all reduced taxation, then from his scanty balances spent wisely on reproductive works, till he had given Egypt the water which was her life, and raised the peasants from a condition of economic slavery to a comfort unknown in the Nile valley since the days of the Pharaohs. In 1904 the British occupation was formally recognized by the Powers of Europe, and the Egyptian finances were released from the bondage of international control.

With prosperity came political activity, and with political activity its degenerate offspring, the demagogue. Lord Cromer handled the thing discreetly, providing means for the expression of popular opinion, and giving to the Egyptians as large a share in the administration of their land as was compatible with efficiency. He devoted himself, too, to educational schemes, with excellent results. His successor, Sir Eldon Gorst, came at a time when, both in Turkey and in Persia, liberal movements were beginning, and it fell to him to make a further experiment in meeting the wishes of Egyptian nationalists. British control was reduced to a minimum, and Egyptian ministers were given a large responsibility. The venture was not altogether successful, for the Khedive was there to turn nationalism into a court intrigue, and the attempt to "liberalize" Egypt resulted in the reappearance of some of the old abuses. The advent of Lord Kitchener found the nationalist movement a good deal discredited, and his brilliant years of office represented a return to something like paternal government. He knew the East as few living men knew it, and he speedily acquired the confidence and admiration of all classes of the population. Under him there was no sudden attempt to westernize institutions, but a continuation of the patient and gradual adjustment and remodelling which had been Lord Cromer's policy. "The counsels to which Time hath not been called, Time will not ratify."

Germany, as we have seen, looked on Egypt as a nursery of sedition. She had considered carefully events like that at Denshawai and the wilder speeches of the demagogues; and with her curious inability to look below the surface of things, she had jumped to the conclusion that democracy, Islam, and chauvinism would combine to produce an explosion. But the truth was that



the ordinary Egyptian was content, and had no grievance ; while in the Sudan the war awoke an unsuspected enthusiasm for the British cause, led by a descendant of the Prophet and the eldest son of the Mahdi. Let Lord Cromer speak :—

“ Why is it that the appeals to religious zeal and fanaticism made by the Turkish militarists and their German fellow-conspirators have been wholly unproductive of result, and have been answered both in Egypt and in the Sudan by the most remarkable expressions of loyalty and friendship towards the British Government ? The presence of British garrisons in Cairo, Alexandria, and Khartum unquestionably counts for much in explanation of these very singular political phenomena. Something also may possibly be attributed to the fact that the more educated classes may have recognized that the Turco-Prussian régime with which they were threatened would assuredly combine many of the worst features both of Western and Eastern administration. But amongst contributory causes I have no hesitation in assigning the foremost place to the fact that no general discontent prevailed of which the agitator, the religious fanatic, or the political intriguer could make use as the lever to further his own designs. In spite of the most positive assurances that they were the victims of ruthless tyranny and oppression, the population both of Egypt and the Sudan refused to believe that they were misgoverned. And why was it that no general discontent prevailed ? . . . The true reason . . . is, I believe, that State expenditure has been carefully controlled, and has been adapted to the financial resources of the two countries concerned, with the result that taxation has been low. It was futile to expect that the Egyptian fellah or the Sudanese tribesman would believe that he was oppressed and maltreated when the demands of the tax-gatherer not only ceased to be capricious, but were far more moderate than either he or his immediate progenitors had ever dreamed to be possible.” \*

On 17th December the Khedive Abbas II., having thrown in his lot with Turkey, ceased to reign in Egypt, which, with the assent of France, was formally proclaimed a British Protectorate. Sir Arthur Henry M'Mahon, a distinguished Indian political officer, was appointed High Commissioner. The title of Khedive, first adopted by Ismail, disappeared ; and the throne of Egypt, with the title of Sultan, was offered to Prince Hussein Kamel Pasha, the second son of Ismail, and therefore the eldest living prince of the house of Mehemet Ali—an able and enlightened man, who had done great service to Egyptian agriculture. The change thus made was the smallest which the circumstances per-

\* *Abbas II.*, p. 20. In the same work will be found an interesting study of the late Khedive.

mitted. There was no annexation; the shadowy suzerainty of Turkey disappeared; but otherwise things remained as before. Nominally the tribute to Constantinople continued, since that tribute had been earmarked for the interest on the Ottoman debt, and was paid direct to the bondholders. Protectorate is the vaguest of political terms, and may involve anything from virtual sovereignty to an almost complete detachment. In this case it meant that Britain was now wholly responsible for the defence of Egypt and for her foreign relations. The very vagueness of the arrangement had its merits, for nothing was laid down as to the order of succession to the sultanate, and the hands of the British Government were left free for some future revision of the whole arrangement. In the meantime it regularized an anomalous international status.

The first object of a belligerent Turkey would naturally be the Suez Canal. The Turkish force in Syria in peace time consisted of the 8th Corps of three divisions, whose headquarters were Damascus. But during November there was a large concentration in Syria, which included the bulk of the 12th Corps from Mosul, part of the 4th Corps from Adrianople, and the Anatolian reserve division normally stationed at Smyrna. Out of this force, which cannot have been less than 120,000, an expeditionary army was created under Djemal Pasha, the Turkish Minister of Marine, a vehement Pan-Islamist, a professed admirer of France, but an inveterate enemy of Britain. The seizure of the two Ottoman Dreadnoughts building in England had embittered his mind, and he burned to wipe off the score by a blow at the Suez Canal, one of the channels by which Britain exerted her naval supremacy. He had been governor of Bagdad and of Basra, and had been at the head of an army corps in the Balkan War. He had no particular military reputation, as he had certainly no military gifts, having won his power rather as an energetic leader of the Committee of Union and Progress than as a general in the field. But as his chief of staff he had a German officer, Kress von Kressenstein, whose resource and ability more than atoned for the defects of the nominal commander.

The advantages of a blow at the Suez Canal were obvious. If the eastern bank could be held, the use of the canal by shipping would be endangered, and Britain cut off from one of her most vital sea routes. If the Canal could be crossed in force, there was the chance of that Egyptian rising for which the faithful of Turkey and Germany hoped. But the difficulties were no less conspicu-

ous. To reach the Canal from Syria an all but waterless desert had to be traversed—a stretch varying from 120 to 150 miles in width. Across this tract of rock and sand there were three routes, all of them hard. The first, which we may call the northern, touched the Mediterranean coast at El Arish, and ran across the desert to El Kantara, on the Canal, twenty-five miles south of Port Said. It was 120 miles long, and had on its course only a few muddy wells, quite insufficient to water an army. The southern road ran from Akaba, at the head of the gulf of that name on the Red Sea, across the base of the peninsula of Sinai to a point on the Canal a little north of Suez. This route was the old Pilgrims' Road from Egypt to Mecca; it was 150 miles long, and, like the other, ill supplied with wells. Between the two was a possible variant which may be called the central route. Leaving the Mediterranean coast at El Arish, it ran up the dry valley called the Wady el Arish, to where the upper part of that depression touched the Pilgrims' Road. Now, from the Turkish bases of Gaza and Beersheba there was no railway to assist an advance, and no route for motor transport; and since an army must carry its own water, it seemed impossible for the invaders to move in force unless they laid down some sort of light railway, or so improved the roads as to make them possible for motors. The Mecca Railway, which ran to the east of Akaba, gave them no help; for between it and the escarpment of the Sinai Peninsula lay two rugged limestone ridges, enclosing a trench 3,000 feet deep. The best route—indeed the only possible—for a light railway was up the Wady el Arish, but this had the disadvantage that at its debouchment on the coast it would come under fire from the sea. The difficulties of Turkey's strategical problem were enhanced by the nature of her object of attack. The Suez Canal was not only the equivalent of a broad and deep river, but was navigable for warships, and its banks provided superb opportunities for defence. It could not be turned, for it ran from sea to sea. It had a width of over two hundred feet, and the banks at many places rose at an angle of thirty degrees to a height of forty feet. On its western shore a lateral railway ran the whole way from Port Said to Suez, connecting at Ismailia with the line to Cairo, and a fresh-water canal followed the same bank for three-quarters of its length, from Suez to opposite El Kantara. Again, most of the ground to the east was flat, and offered a good field of fire to the defenders on the west bank or to ships in the channel. In a few places there were dunes on the east side which might give cover to an invader.

Such a place lay just south of El Kantara, several others were to be found south of Ismailia, and there was a small rise south of the Bitter Lakes. Any Turkish attack might therefore be looked for in the Ismailia-Bitter Lakes section. The British forces in Egypt at the time included certain detachments of Indian cavalry and infantry, the Australian and New Zealand contingents under Major-General Birdwood, a number of British Territorials, among them the East Lancashire Division, as well as the regular Egyptian army. The whole force was under the command of Sir John Maxwell, a soldier with a long experience of the Nile valley wars.

At the end of October it was reported that a force of 2,000 Bedouins was marching on Egypt, and on November 21st there was a skirmish at Katia, east of the Canal, between this force and part of the Bikanir Camel Corps. Previous to this the Anglo-Egyptian posts had been withdrawn from El Arish and from the Sinai Peninsula. Nothing more was heard of the invasion for more than two months. There were many rumours that Djemal was having difficulties with his command, and was impressing for his expeditionary force a variety of unwarlike Syrians, from peasants in the Jordan valley to cab drivers in Jerusalem. On January 28, 1915, small advanced parties had crossed the desert. One coming by the El Arish route reached Katia, and was beaten back by a Gurkha post east of El Kantara. Another party coming by the Akaba route was driven back at Kubri, just east of Suez. The desert was well scouted by British airmen, and about that time a party was landed at Alexandretta Bay, in North Syria, and cut the telegraph wires. On the 29th it was announced that the Turks had occupied Katiyeh, and had several posts to the west of that place. Five days later, on 3rd February, came the main attack, for which these proceedings had been reconnaissances.

The Turks officially described the main attack as a reconnaissance; and the description may be accepted, for it could not be regarded as a serious invasion. But it was a reconnaissance not of design but by compulsion, for Djemal found, when he began the attempt, that to transport even one army corps across the desert was wholly beyond his power. The troops seem to have numbered over 12,000, and to have advanced by the central route up the Wady el Arish. Four hours' journey from the Canal they split into two detachments. One moved against Ismailia, to the south of which the east bank gives a certain cover. A second, and much the stronger, advanced to a point opposite Toussum,





(Facing p. 516.)

GENERAL MAP OF THE TURKISH EMPIRE.

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just south of Lake Timsah, where the ground on the east is high and broken. A small flanking attack was made from the northern route against El Kantara. The troops were mainly from the 8th Corps, with portions of the 3rd and 6th Corps, a few of the 4th (Adrianople) Corps, a remnant of the old Tripoli field force, known as the Champions of Islam, and a number of Bedouin irregulars.

The preliminaries of the movement began on the night of 2nd February. A feint against Ismailia that evening had been spoiled by a dust storm, but in the darkness the sentries on the Canal saw and fired at shadowy figures on the side opposite Toussum. The Turks had brought a number of pontoon boats in carts across the desert, and these they attempted to launch, along with several rafts made of kerosene tins. They never had a chance of succeeding. Crowded on the shore, with a high, steep bank behind them, our men mowed them down with rifle fire and Maxims. A few of the vessels were launched, but they were soon riddled and sunk. The enemy then lined the banks and tried to silence our fire, and the duel went on till morning broke. With daylight the battle became general all along the stretch from Ismailia to the Bitter Lakes. There was a small flotilla on the Canal—several torpedo boats, the old Indian Marine transport *Hardinge*, and the French guardships *Requin* and *D'Entrecasteaux*. The Turks had a number of field batteries and two 6-inch guns, which one of the French ships promptly silenced. The torpedo boats made short work of the remaining pontoons, and the crew of one landed on the eastern bank and raided a trench of the enemy. A few of the invaders crossed in the night and sniped our men in the rear; but they were speedily disposed of, and those who swam over later were deserters. In the afternoon British troops from Serapeum and Toussum took the offensive, and, admirably supported by artillery, drove the enemy from a large part of the eastern bank. Meanwhile the Ismailian garrison also moved forward, and cleared their front. About the same time the half-hearted attacks on our flank near El Kantara and Suez had also failed. By the evening of the 3rd the fiasco was over, and early next morning the British crossed the Canal in force and began the work of rounding up the enemy. By 8th February there were no Turks within twenty miles of the Canal, and beyond that only a few scattered rearguards, the main force being in full retreat for the borders. It is not clear why it was allowed to escape. With 130 waterless miles to cover, there seemed no reason why a beaten and dispirited force should ever have succeeded in reaching Beersheba.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE BATTLES ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT IN THE SPRING OF 1915.

*3rd January—22nd March.*

The Year opens on the Eastern Front—German Attack on the Bzura and the Rawka—The Attack in East Prussia—Destruction of Russian Tenth Army—Battle of Przasnysz—The Fight for the Carpathian Passes—The Russians enter Przemysl.

At the beginning of January the Russian front had found a position in which it seemed that it could abide. Beginning on the lower Niemen it ran through the Masurian Lakes inside the East Prussian frontier, regained Russian territory north of the Narev, passed just south of Mława, bent in a salient towards Plock, and crossed the Vistula just west of the mouth of the Bzura. Thence it returned to the east bank of the Bzura and followed it, and that of its tributary the Rawka, in a line making due south till it struck the Nida. It ran down the west bank of the Nida to the upper Vistula, followed the Donajetz and the Biala to the Carpathian foothills, reached the watershed at the Dukla Pass, and then bent northwards, holding the Galician entrances to the Lupkow and the Uzsok. East from that it kept the northern side of the range, close up to the foothills, till it reached the Rumanian frontier. Its total length was just short of 900 miles, the longest battle-front in the history of the world. But it was no continuous network of defence like the line in the West, being little more than intermittent field trenches, only wired when bogs, forests, and hillsides were not provided by nature. Like her Western Allies, Russia adopted a system of army groups. These were two in number—a southern under Ivanov, and a northern under Russki. In Ivanov's command were the army of the Nida under Evert; the army of the Donajetz under Radko Dmitrieff; the force engaged in the investment of Przemysl under General Selivanov; Brussilov's army of the Carpathians; and the small



Ninth Army in the Bukovina under Alexeiev, who had been Ivanov's Chief of Staff. Russki's group embraced the army operating on the Pilitza; the forces defending Warsaw along the Rawka and the Bzura; the army of the Narev; and the army operating against Masurenland.

The immediate plan of investing Cracow had been relinquished. Russia had come to realize the weakness of numbers without weapons, and had no hope yet awhile of receiving adequate supplies either from home or from foreign factories. So far the campaign had been terribly costly, and thousands of the best regular officers and hundreds of thousands of the most seasoned troops were dead or in captivity. What remained were short of artillery and ammunition, of rifles and cartridges, of machine guns—even of clothing. She realized, too, that she was likely for the next months to be the chief target of the German attacks. She was therefore compelled to forgo her dreams of Cracow and Posen, and to limit her offensive to her flanks. An advance in East Prussia would straighten and shorten her front, and a southward movement through the Carpathians would secure Rumania's allegiance, and might prove the last straw for a fainting Austria. Such movements on the wings meant that the central part of the front must be seriously weakened. The places were chosen because it was towards East Prussia and Hungary that the Teutonic League was most vulnerable. To outrage the sacred East Prussian soil would bring Hindenburg hot on the invaders' trail, and Hungary was Germany's chief remaining granary and the most sensitive part of the Dual Monarchy. The Grand Duke did not contemplate any enveloping offensive; for that he had not the men or guns. All he sought was to annoy and distract his enemy.

Germany in January 1915 had reached the conclusion that nothing could be done for the moment in the West, and that it behoved her once for all to settle accounts with Russia. Only thus would Austria be saved from dissolution. Hindenburg was due to receive in February four new corps, and with them he hoped to reach a decision in East Prussia which would at the same time relieve the situation in the Carpathians. He created a new X. Army under von Eichhorn, to take position between the VIII. and the IX. Armies. With it and the VIII. he hoped to envelop the Russian right. Meantime a new German Southern Army was formed under von Linsingen, to be inserted in the Austrian front east of the Uzsok Pass. It was a course from which he was strongly averse, but he had no alternative. Austria's signals of distress

were too urgent to be disregarded. In order to mislead the Russians the IX. Army was instructed to begin the operation by an attack upon the Rawka and Bzura lines, with the aid of eighteen thousand rounds of gas shells, as if the German plan were still a frontal assault on Warsaw.

## I.

The details of the valley of the Rawka must be noted. From its confluence with the Bzura it runs mostly south till it is cut by the railway line between Skierniewice and Warsaw. On both sides the ground slopes gently down to the water's edge. The town of Bolimov lies on its eastern bank about midway between the railway and the Bzura. Opposite Bolimov, about two miles from the stream, there is a roll of downs, with the castle and distillery of Borzymov at the northern end. South of these downs on both sides of the Rawka are great belts of wood which extend for some dozen miles eastward towards Warsaw. Bolimov is about forty miles from the capital, and is connected with it by a fair road. The Russian front was on the west bank of the Bzura for two miles above its meeting with the Vistula. Then it changed to the eastern bank, keeping close to the water's edge, and passing through the town of Sochaczew, where it cut the Lowicz-Warsaw line. On the Rawka it was more retired from the stream, and held a line of trenches just in front of the crest of the downs opposite Bolimov, while the Germans had theirs close to the water, and on the east bank. Skierniewice was in German hands, and the Russian front crossed the railway about two miles east of it in a clearing of the larch forests.

On Sunday, 31st January, Mackensen had concentrated masses of artillery all along the front of the Rawka, and down the Bzura as far as Sochaczew. He made his great artillery bombardment on a wide front in order to puzzle the enemy as to the direction of the main attack. But in the meantime he was getting together his strength of men and guns on a line of seven miles in front of Bolimov. Here, on the evening of Monday, 1st February, he had not less than seven divisions—a strength of something like ten rifles per yard. That night the artillery, working by the map, began a "preparation" from the slopes west of the Rawka against the Russian position on the Borzymov crest. It was snowing heavily, and under cover of the guns and the weather the infantry

advanced up the slopes. Their formation was massed, sometimes ten and sometimes twenty-two men deep. They were mowed down by Russian shrapnel and machine-gun fire, but the impetus of numbers carried them into the first line of Russian trenches. All along the front, from the castle of Borzymov past Vola Szydlovska to Goumin among the woods and down to the Skierniewice-Warsaw railway, the Germans gained ground. A second and then a third line of trenches were captured on the Tuesday, and by that evening the Russians had been pushed back to the crest of the ridge, and in some places beyond it, where the ground began to slope down to the little river Sucha.

Mackensen laid his plans well, and what was considered as a feint almost resulted in a substantive victory. He did not propose to repeat the mistakes he had made before Lodz, and drive into the enemy's front a wedge too narrow to be effective. He realized that a breach must be wide enough to move in and to permit him to operate against the broken flanks. All through Wednesday, 3rd February, he looked like succeeding. But the place he had chosen for his assault happened to be the place of all others which the Grand Duke could most readily reinforce. There were two railways and two good roads, and troops were hurried along them from Warsaw, some divisions under orders for the north having been hastily recalled. Through the driving snow the supports came on, and on Thursday, 4th February, late in the afternoon, the German advance was checked. It had done wonders. It was over the crest of Borzymov, and it had advanced nearly five miles along the Warsaw railway. Another day and the Rawka front might have been fatally breached, though the Blonie lines would still have lain between the enemy and the capital.

The counter-attack at Bolimov had scarcely begun to develop when Hindenburg set in motion his great northern scheme. From Darkehmen northward lay Eichhorn's X. Army, the enveloping force to be directed south-east to the frontier; south of it was Otto von Below's VIII. Army moving on the Bobr and the Narev, with a corps from the IX. Army echeloned on the right rear. For those who love historical parallels the position in the East at the beginning of February was full of interest. It resembled, as a distinguished writer pointed out,\* the situation in June 1812, when Napoleon was mustering his forces for the invasion of Russia. "Then, as now, the front of the opposing armies was immense, and extended from Galicia to the Niemen. Schwarzenberg and

\* Colonel Repington in *The Times*, 17th February 1915.

his Austrians, issuing from Galicia, represent the armies under the Archduke Eugene; the King of Westphalia marching on Warsaw and Bialystok is paralleled by Mackensen's command; the Viceroy of Italy, farther to the left, is reproduced by the German force on the right bank of the Vistula; the Emperor Napoleon, Murat, and the dukes and princes who came from Thorn and Marienwerder into East Prussia, stand for the new German forces which Hindenburg is crowding into Masurenland; while lastly, Macdonald, with the Prussians in front of Tilsit, has his counterpart in the German force which is already across the Memel, and will act, no doubt, as Macdonald acted before."

## II.

When, towards the end of January, the Grand Duke began his forward movement in East Prussia, the force used was the Tenth Army of four corps, commanded by General Baron Sievers. A strong frost had set in with February, much snow had fallen, and icy winds from the north piled up drifts on every highway. But in spite of the weather, by the 6th of February the Tenth Army had made astonishing progress. Its right was close upon Tilsit, and thence it ran just east of Insterburg along the Angerapp River, just east of Lötzen, which was the key of the main route through the Lakes, well to the west of Lyck, till its left rested on the town of Johannsburg. South of it, but separated by a big gap, lay the scattered forces which constituted the Russian Army of the Narev. It had two railways behind it, one from Insterburg to Kovno, and one from Lyck to Ossovietz; but two railways were scarcely sufficient for a front of a hundred miles.

On 7th February the surprise which Hindenburg had prepared was sprung upon the invaders. The German advance was pressed along the whole line Tilsit-Johannsburg, and according to plan the left wing—the 21st Corps under Fritz von Below—swept in an enflanking movement east of Tilsit in the curve formed by the lower Niemen. The Russian right, in front of Pilkallen and Gumbinnen, was compelled to retire to avoid envelopment, and the natural line of its retreat was along the railway to Kovno. In so doing it turned a little to the north-east, and since the railway helped its speed of movement, the corps just to the south of it was left out of line. This corps was the 20th, commanded by General Bulgakov, and composed of one first-line division and



three regiments of reservists—in all some 30,000 men. On the 7th it had been lying along the Angerapp River from Gumbinnen to south of Darkehmen. Eichhorn drove it back to the lateral frontier railway, after which there was no good way through the forests and marshes between the frontier and the Niemen. Its right wing was turned, and it was pressed down toward the south, with the enemy on three sides of it. In the wide forests north of Suwalki it speedily became a broken force, and companies and regiments were left to make the best of their way home. The two southern corps had to face the attack of Otto von Below's VIII. Army between Lötzen and Johannsburg. They held a strong position in the eastern narrows of the Lake region, and the passages were fiercely disputed. The extreme German right drove the Russian left across the frontier to Kolno; other corps farther north occupied Johannsburg, and pressed back the Russians from before Lötzen. The sternest struggle was for the narrows which covered the approach to Lyck from the west, but by the night of the 13th Lyck was abandoned, and the two southern Russian corps were straggling over the border, retreating by the Suwalki-Seyny causeway and by the Ossovietz railway. By the 12th Eichhorn was over the Russian frontier, and had occupied Mariampol, and Otto von Below was also on Russian soil, moving towards Grodno and Ossovietz. By that time what was left of Sievers's Tenth Army was on the Niemen and the Bobr.

A bare outline gives little idea of the difficulties of the operations on both sides. For an army to fall back seventy miles under the pressure of a force greatly its superior, based on a good railway system, is at all times a hard feat. When it is added that more than half of Sievers's army had no railways to assist them, but must struggle with their guns through blind forests choked with snowdrifts, the task verged on the impossible. The Russian losses were large, and the Tenth Army was all but annihilated. By the 20th the vigour of the German thrust had spent itself. The Russian remnant was entrenched, and the inevitable counter-attack had begun. Once again the rival forces were on more equal terms, for the zone of German railways had been left behind. Motor transport was impossible, and the big Pomeranian horses were for work in snow and slush far inferior to the little Russian ponies.

The Russian stand, which was virtually a counter-attack, began about the 19th. The line held was well to the west of the Niemen. It ran from Kovno, covering Olita, Miroslav, Drusseniki, and Grodno; then in front of Ossovietz down the line of

the Bobr, and then north of the Narev. For the present we are dealing only with the thrust of Eichhorn and Otto von Below on the Niemen and the Bobr, and may neglect the operations developing along the Narev. The German aim was clear. The map will show that the main line from Warsaw to Petrograd crosses the Niemen at Grodno, running about thirty miles south of Ossovietz, and at an average distance of twenty miles from the upper Narev. If this line could be cut, then one of Warsaw's chief communications would cease, and the road would be open for the capture of the city by an advance from the northern flank. Obviously, the most deadly movement against this line would be that made nearest Warsaw; but since the Germans had got so close to the Niemen it was justifiable to attempt to cut it there, far as it was from Warsaw, provided a great effort were also made against the Narev section. The fighting on the Niemen and the Bobr therefore developed into the operations of the left wing and left centre of the German armies. The extreme left wing did little. Turoggen, on the right bank of the Niemen, was seized and held, but the numbers were small, and no serious effort was made to force the difficult line of the Niemen's tributaries, and take Kovno from the north. The chief attacks were two. Eichhorn about 20th February launched the veterans of the 21st Corps from Suwalki against the Niemen a little north of Grodno. Dense forests on both sides of the river made an effective screen, and the corps succeeded in making the passage, and for the better part of a week maintained themselves effectively on the eastern shore. They were unable to move against the Warsaw-Petrograd railway, which was less than ten miles off. The second attack was delivered against Ossovietz, the fortress which Hindenburg had previously assaulted in September. Then, it will be remembered, the Germans had failed to find emplacements for their heavy guns in the wide marshes, for Ossovietz stands on a strip of hard land, where run the railway and the highroad, and on all sides the swamps creep up to its skirts, while the only good gun positions for miles round are part of the defences of the fortress. This second siege of Ossovietz was conducted with great determination, and lasted for the better part of a fortnight. It made no impression, for in those flat, snow-clad wastes, where every knuckle of dry soil was known to the defence, there were no opportunities for screening the big howitzers, and the guns of the fort seem to have rapidly silenced them.

By the beginning of March the Russian counter-attack had developed, and everywhere, from Kovno to the Narev, the invaders

were checked. The 21st Corps had to leave its perch across the Niemen. On 5th March the serious attack on Ossovietz ended, and the big howitzers were shipped on their railway carriages. By the middle of March Hindenburg had drawn back his left and left centre to a position some ten miles inside Russian territory, and covering his own frontiers. He had achieved one part of his purpose. He had cleared away for good the Russian menace in East Prussia, and had established an abiding threat to Warsaw from the north.

We turn to the simultaneous campaign on the Narev, where the right wing of the VIII. Army under von Scholtz was engaged, presently reinforced by a detachment from the X. Army under von Gallwitz. Here lay the crucial part of the operations, for here lay the nearest flank road to Warsaw. Hindenburg, after the blow to the Russian right, hoped to find the Narev so ill guarded that he might cross it and take possession of the main railway before Russia grasped his purpose. His winning card was the East Prussian lines, which allowed him to move men speedily and securely and far behind his front.

We must note the details of the Narev valley, from the point where it receives the stream of the Bobr. It flows in a tortuous course generally to the south-west in a marshy district, mostly heavily forested, and with few ridges to break the monotony. North of it and east of Przasnysz there are some hills of considerable height, with forests patching their sandy slopes. It had a series of fortified towns commanding the chief crossings, which, beginning from the east, were Lomza, Ostrolenka, Rozhan, Pultusk, and Sierok, where it joins the Bug about fifteen miles from Novo Georgievsk. The great Warsaw-Petrograd line ran from thirty to forty miles south of it, and sent off several branches, which met at Ostrolenka. These branches were the only railway connections of the Narev valley. Just west of it ran the important line from Warsaw to East Prussia through Mlawa. The town of Przasnysz lies about half-way between the East Prussian frontier and Rozhan on the Narev. Eight roads converged upon it, and gave it, therefore, some strategical value. To the east lay the low, boggy valley of the river Orzyc, at that time deep in snow. West was a ridge about two hundred feet high, which separated the Orzyc system from the little valley of the river Lydynia, down which ran the Mlawa-Warsaw railway. About the middle of February the Russian Army of the Narev—the Twelfth Army commanded by General Plehve—was very weak. The strongest part, its left,

had been in action towards Plock since January. In front of Przasnysz there was an outpost of a single brigade, and between Przasnysz and the railway was another outpost, a division strong, holding the ridge between the two watersheds.

On Monday, the 18th, the Germans, now reinforced by Gallwitz's detachment, began to concentrate on the line Mława-Chorzele, being well served by the lateral frontier railway from Soldau to Willenberg, and by the Mława-Warsaw line on their right. The advance began on Monday, 22nd February. The right came down the Mława railway, the centre from Chorzele down the main highroad to Przasnysz, and the left down the Orzyc valley in a flanking movement directed apparently against Ostrolenka and the Narev. The single Russian brigade in front of Przasnysz was driven back upon the town, and on the 24th the Germans under von Morgen captured Przasnysz, taking a number of guns and about half the isolated brigade. There remained only the division which had taken its stand on the ridge which lies between Przasnysz and Czechanov on the river Lydynia. On the 23rd this force was assaulted by the German right from the Mława railway, and by the centre from Przasnysz, which attacked by way of the village of Vola Vierzbovska, to the south-east of the ridge. Meantime the left wing was proceeding down the Orzyc, and had taken the town of Krasnosielce, and was threatening Ostrolenka and Rozhan. This most critical situation was saved by the division on the ridge. Fighting a battle on two fronts, it held out for more than thirty-six hours—till the evening of Wednesday, the 24th, when the 4th Siberian Corps had begun to come up. They came by Czechanov, where they strengthened the line of the heroic division, and other supports arrived from Pultusk, Rozhan, and Ostrolenka, against the German right and centre. The enclosers had now become the enclosed, for the German centre was hemmed in at Vola Vierzbovska, between the Russians on the ridge and the corps coming from the valley of the Narev. The Russian right meanwhile had attacked Krasnosielce, and driven the German left off the Orzyc. The invaders were being pressed in on three sides, and driven northward through Przasnysz.

This battle was fought under conditions which are scarcely to be paralleled from the history of modern war. Russia, hard put to it for munitions and arms, was unable to equip masses of the trained men that she had ready, and it was the custom to have unarmed troops in the rear of any action, who could be used to fill gaps and take up the weapons of the dead. At Przasnysz men



were flung into the firing line without rifles, armed only with a sword-bayonet in one hand and a bomb in the other. That meant fighting, desperate fighting, at the closest quarters. The Russians had to get at all costs within range to throw their bombs, and then they charged with cold steel. This was berserker warfare, a defiance of all modern rules, a return to the conditions of the primitive combat. But it succeeded. The Germans gave ground before numbers which were not their equal, and huddled into Przasnysz. On Friday, the 26th, the Russians entered that town, and all Saturday the battle raged among the snowy ridges towards Stegna. By Sunday morning the enemy's strength was broken and the retreat was ordered. The Battle of Przasnysz decided the fate of Hindenburg's bid for Warsaw by a flank movement. It was an action which had more affinity with one of the struggles of old days than with modern engagements. The stand on the ridge with the enemy on both sides should have been impossible by all the text-books. But with Russian armies impossibilities happened, and the fight deserves to rank in the history of the war with Foch's two-fronted battle at Fère-Champenoise and Smith-Dorrien's at Le Cateau.

### III.

The scene now changes to the Russian left, where the battles of the spring were for the most part a long struggle for the mountain passes. To capture a pass it is not sufficient to hold the crest at the watershed. The debouchment into the enemy's country must also be held, for it is precisely at the debouchment that the point of danger lies. The invader, shut up in a strait mountain valley, has no lateral communications; but this is an advantage to him till he has descended the farther slope, for he is immune from flank attacks. But when he would issue from the pass into the enemy's lowlands, he is at once exposed to assault from many routes, and unless he can hold the foothills, which will allow him to debouch and deploy, he can make little of his mountain vantage points.

In examining the struggle for the Carpathians, which lasted through December and January, and started with new force at the close of the latter month, it must be kept in mind what it means to hold the passes. Brussilov held all the main ones in October, because he commanded all their outlets to the Hungarian plains.

Russia lost them all in December—lost in some cases her own Galician approaches. By Christmas she had regained all the Galician entrances, and was almost on the crest of the Dukla. On the first day of January she had carried the watershed west of the Uzsok, and had begun to pour down the Hungarian glens towards Ungvar. Presently she was struggling for the Lupkow, and word came of her cavalry at Mesö Laborcz on the southern side. In the mass of news of those operations in the hills it was hard to find exact truth, for the simple reason that no distinction was made in the *communiqués* between the main position of an army and the doings of a cavalry patrol. For example, a few weeks later Russian successes were reported at Munkacs, thirty miles south of the Carpathians, while on the same day a little farther east there was a vigorous Austrian attack on Russian positions fully twenty miles north of the range. This did not mean that the Russian line was indented like a nightmare saw, but only that a cavalry vanguard had shown exceptional boldness. But during January and February 1915 Russia did not hold any of the passes in the true sense. She could not have debouched from any of them in safety. Her main position was still on the north side of the Carpathians. Brussilov in his mountain campaign was not yet inaugurating an offensive. He was endeavouring to clear his flanks, to win back the ground he had held in October. The real offensive of these months was farther east, in the Bukovina. But Brussilov's advance was met by a vigorous Austrian concentration, which was directed to one single object—the relief of Przemysl. The enemy right wing had been reinforced by German troops, and knowing well that the great fortress was *in extremis*, they made one last effort to save it and drive Brussilov from the Galician foothills.

In an earlier chapter the nature of the Carpathian range has been sketched, but the time has come to look more closely at its character. It bends in a semicircle round the Hungarian plain, but it is not to be regarded as a single continuous ridge, like the Pyrenees. At the north-western end is the mountain country of North Hungary, a region more than a hundred miles wide from north to south, which includes the bare volcanic range of the High Tatra and the loftiest peaks of the system. At the south-eastern end is a still broader mass, formed by the hilly country of the Bukovina, which acts as a bastion, and, inside the loop of the chain, the great mountain district of Transylvania, bounded on the south by the Transylvanian Alps. The central part of the range, which was

the theatre of the campaigns, forms a kind of curtain between the two flanking masses. Here lie the chief passes, and here is the main route from the north to the plain of Hungary—the road traversed centuries ago by Tartar and Magyar invaders. Between the valleys north and south of the watershed there is a notable difference. In the north they are separated by long spurs of hill, and run roughly parallel and some distance apart; but in the south—owing to the semicircular nature of the chain—they converge rapidly on each other, and their streams unite to form the Theiss. In general the distance from plain to plain over the central range is not less than thirty miles. The rock is mainly sandstone, with some few volcanic outcrops on the south which form peaks and precipices. Sandstone means for the most part easy slopes, rounded tops, and wide valleys. Unlike the High Tatra, too, the section is heavily wooded, and as we go east the woods increase till the range is one undulating forest. On the lower lands the trees are beech, and as the ground rises fir and pine clothe it till just short of the summits. The Bukovina means the country of beech woods.

The central Carpathians, from the Dukla Pass to the Bukovina, were, therefore, the easiest avenue between Hungary and the north. There the summits were lowest and the range most narrow. There were also good lines of lateral communication on both sides, as well as five railways crossing the chain. On the Galician side a line followed the foothills, and linked up the mouths of the glens from Sandek to Stryj. On the Hungarian side the branch lines running into the hills were connected by a good main line from Pressburg by Budapest and Miskolcz to Munkacs. So far as communications went, both the combatants were reasonably well served. But the danger was greater on one side than on the other. From the nature of the topography, to conquer Hungary from Galicia was easier than to conquer Galicia from Hungary. An enemy once south of the passes must advance along valleys which quickly converged, and whenever he approached the junction point his advent would make the position of troops in the other converging valleys untenable. On the Galician side, on the contrary, the long parallel valleys, which often in their earlier courses run in the same direction as the range, gave the defence strong positions, and enabled one part of the front to keep its ground in one valley, though the invader had driven in the outposts in a neighbouring glen. When Austria made her effort to save Przemysl there was a defensive as well as an offensive purpose in her move-

ment. Unless Brussilov were driven right away from the passes, unless Austria held the Galician debouchments, there was no security for those rich Hungarian cornlands in which the sowers would soon be busy, and from which Germany looked to make good the deficiencies of her coming harvest.

While Brussilov was endeavouring to push across the passes from the Dukla to the Uzsok, the extreme Russian left moved through the Bukovina towards the Carpathian watershed. Brussilov, it will be remembered, had seized Czernovitz, the capital, and Kolomea in the first half of September, after the victory of Lemberg, and ever since the northern Bukovina had been in Russian hands. Very early in the new year a forward movement began on the left by a small Russian force—not more than a division—which was opposed by an Austrian force but little stronger. On 6th January the town of Kimpolung was captured, and the Russians had fought their way for eighty miles to the mountain watershed. Almost the whole of the Bukovina was now in their hands. On 17th January they took the pass of Kirlibaba, a low saddle between wooded ranges, over which runs the road from Kimpolung to the Hungarian town of Maramaros Sziget. The main pass of those parts, the Borgo, which lies in the angle where Transylvania, the Bukovina, and Rumania meet, was not in their possession; and this was the most vital pass, for it gave access by the Szamos River to the lateral communications of the Austrian front, and by the Maros River to the heart of Transylvania.

A great army does not adopt a serious offensive with one division. The Russian movement in the Bukovina was not strategical but political in its import. Russia had not sufficient forces to turn the enemy's flank, but she had enough for a political diversion. The Bukovina advance was directed to the address of Rumania. That country was in a position of peculiar difficulty. Strategically, she commanded the Austrian right rear; commercially, she was one of Germany's main supply grounds for petrol and grain. She was intimately linked with Italy in her foreign policy, and it was generally believed that the entry of the one on the side of the Allies would soon involve the adhesion of the other. But, at the same time, her situation was dangerous, for on her flanks she had a hostile Turkey and a dubious Bulgaria. Moreover, while she had little love for the Teutonic League, she was still profoundly suspicious of Russia, and the loss of Bessarabia rankled scarcely less than the loss of Transylvania. During the month of January arrangements were made for the advance



by the Bank of England of £5,000,000 against Rumanian Treasury Bills—an arrangement which pointed to a considerable progress in her negotiations with the Allies. But to make her way clear it was necessary to remove the menace of Turkey, and, as we shall see later, the Allies took steps to achieve this result by their Dardanelles operations. Further, some pressure must be brought to bear on popular opinion, and the presence of a Russian army on the threshold of Transylvania might prove a potent influence. The Bukovina and Transylvania contained a large population Rumanian in blood and language. If Rumania allowed these districts to be occupied by Russia and still remained neutral, she would have little prospect of making a successful claim to the annexation of any part of them at the close of the war. If she hoped for Transylvania, she must play her part in winning it. But if the Russian advance aimed at putting pressure upon Rumania to join the Allies, it was also aimed at facilitating her co-operation if she took the plunge. The map will show how the Bukovina dominated the communications between Rumania and the Russian front in Galicia. The main Rumanian line ran north, and connected by Czernovitz and Kolomea with Lemberg and the Galician system. If the Bukovina were held by Austria, Rumania would be compelled, should she intervene, either to attack Hungary by the Transylvanian passes—a difficult course, which would turn her effort into an isolated campaign, cut off from all direct communication with the Russian front—or she would be forced to send her troops by a long circuit through Bessarabia and Podolia.

The position towards the end of the third week in January was, therefore, as follows: Brussilov held the crests of the Carpathians at the Dukla Pass, and practically at the Lupkow, and everywhere else the Russian line was close up to the northern foothills. If the advance here was pushed with vigour the upper valleys of the Theiss might be won, and converging columns would descend on the Hungarian plains. In the east of the chain the Russians had won the watershed at Kirlibaba, had occupied all the Bukovina except the small south-western corner around the Borgo Pass, and were threatening to bring about that political result—the entrance of Rumania into the struggle—which Austria especially dreaded. The situation called for a great effort, and, with Germany's aid, Austria was ready. On 13th January Count Berchtold, the Austrian minister of Foreign Affairs, resigned his portfolio. A great nobleman and landed proprietor, he had found

politics an uncongenial task. His place was taken by Baron Stephen Burian, a Hungarian diplomatist, who was of the party of the Hungarian Premier, Count Tisza. We may regard Count Tisza as now the one dominant influence in the policy of the Dual Monarchy. It was his own Hungary that was threatened, and he was resolved that no German preoccupation with East Prussia and Warsaw should prevent him from holding the enemy in the gates.

The Carpathian campaign was fought in deep snow—three feet or more on the saddles, and far deeper in the glens. Eastward, among the beech woods, the weather improved, but for the most part the conditions were scarcely less rigorous than those which Enver some weeks before had faced in the Caucasus. The sufferings on both sides were terrible; but it was worse for the Austrians, who were of a less hardy breed than the Russian peasant soldiers, and were less accustomed to a bitter winter. In the last week of January the sun shone in the mountains and observers described how the virgin white of the slopes, as the battles progressed, became a vivid scarlet with the blood of the fallen. In February blizzards were the rule, and the fighting in the uplands slackened perforce, though the struggle in the foothills continued. The Austrian forces were grouped in three main armies. In the section from the Dukla to the Uzsok was the army of Boroevitch, charged with the relief of Przemyśl. In the section from the Uzsok to the Wyzkov Pass, directed along the Munkacs-Lemberg railway, was the army of the German von Linsingen, which contained various German formations, and which had for its Chief of Staff Ludendorff, bitterly contemptuous of his allies, and complaining that Germany had bound herself to a corpse. Farther east was the army of von Pflanzer-Baltin, moving upon the Bukovina, mainly by the Delatyn or Jablonitza Pass. The whole offensive was skilfully stage-managed. Rumours were set about that Austria meditated a great attack upon Serbia, and that four German corps had been sent south for the purpose. A pretence was made of bombarding Belgrade and occupying islands in the Danube. But the troops never got farther south than the railway junction of Miskolcz, whence they went eastward to the Maramaros valleys.

The Austrian left made little progress. It was held by Brusilov on the Dukla and Lupkow; but it crossed the Rostoki and the Uzsok, and forced the Russians back on the upper stream of the San about Baligrod. The resistance of the Russian right at this

point was much assisted by the work of Dmitrieff and the Army of the Donajetz, who, on a front from the Vistula to Zmigrod, checked the offensive of the Austrian II. Army, and inflicted on it severe losses. East of the Lupkow, however, the Austrians won all the passes, and poured their troops into Galicia. Linsingen, moving by the railway pass of the Beskid, and the two road passes Vereczke and Wyzkov, advanced in the direction of Stryj and Lemberg. Farther east, Pflanzer-Baltin crossed the range by the old Magyar and Tartar ways, and advanced upon Stanislaw and Kolomea; while on 23rd January his right wing pushed the Russians off the Kirlibaba Pass, and three days later was close upon Kimpolung.

The two points of danger were the advance of the Austrian centre on Stryj and of the Austrian right upon Stanislaw. A strategical blunder seems to have been committed in the first region. The capture of Stryj and the upper valley of the Dniester would be the first step to the relief of Przemysl, and the attack was pushed here with a force which could have been used to more purpose in the Bukovina. Przemysl showed once again the fatal magnetism which a fortress can exercise both on the attack and the defence. Linsingen's effort shipwrecked upon the difficulties of the Galician foothills. The glens run long and straight towards the Dniester. The pass, which is variously called the Vereczke and the Tucholka, carries a road which crosses a minor ridge, and descends by a tributary glen to the valley of the Opor. The pass, called the Beskid or the Volocz, carries a railway which continues down the Opor valley. Between the meeting-place of these two roads—that is, between the Opor and the stream which runs from the direction of the Vereczke Pass—is a ridge which takes its name from the village of Koziowa, and which is marked in the map as 992 metres. It rises steeply, is forested to its summit, and its roots are washed by foaming torrents. There, during February and the first days of March, Brussilov's centre withstood Linsingen's assault. The action of Koziowa saved Stryj and Lemberg, prevented the relief of Przemysl, and gave time for reinforcements to reach the Bukovina. The Russians, so long as they held the heights, prevented the debouchment of the Austrian columns, and in spite of desperate bayonet attacks they could not be dislodged. The situation was an instructive commentary on the nature of mountain warfare. The two Austrian forces, moving by two different passes, could not co-operate because of the high land between them. If the forces

on the left needed reinforcements from the right, they must be taken back over the range to the point north of Munkacs where the two routes diverged. The Russians, holding the valley mouths and all the plains behind them, were in a far easier position. The selection of Koziowa for a stand showed good generalship, for it was the main strategic point of the central range. So long as the Lupkow and the Dukla were held, and so long as the openings of the Rostoki and the Uzsok were stoutly guarded, the defence of Koziowa meant the safety of Galicia.

The Austrian right made better progress. About 18th February, moving from the southern corner of the Bukovina at Kimpolung, and also by way of the Jablonitza Pass down the valley of the Pruth, it took Czernovitz, on the railway from Rumania, and presently Kolomea, which is the junction between the Jablonitza line and the railway from Czernovitz to Lemberg. Between 27th February and 3rd March it advanced northward and took Stanislaw, from which ran the line which followed the foothills to Stryj and Przemysl. It was a conspicuous success, for it threatened the Russian main communications. From Stanislaw, as the crow flies, it was only some seventy miles to Lemberg and some fifty to Tarnopol, through which ran the line to Kiev and Odessa. It did not succeed, however, in forcing the Russians behind the Dniester. The weak Russian left fell back rapidly, fighting small delaying actions, till it reached a position where reinforcements could join it. On the 3rd of March these reinforcements arrived, and the enemy was driven out of Stanislaw, and the menace to the Stanislaw-Stryj line removed. During the next fortnight the Austrian right was slowly pushed back almost to the Kolomea-Czernovitz line. By 21st March the position in the Carpathians was that the Russians held the Dukla, and were close on the crest of the Lupkow. They did not hold the Rostoki or the Uzsok, but held in strength the northern debouchments, so that they were of no use to the enemy. All the passes to the east of the Uzsok were in Austrian hands, but the true debouchments had not been won till the Jablonitza was reached, from which point to the Rumanian frontier the Austrian armies were from sixty to a hundred miles north of the watershed. The main strategical object of the offensive had failed, for Przemysl was no nearer to relief or Lemberg to recapture.

On Monday, 22nd March, after an investment of nearly seven months Przemysl fell. The city had been famous as a fortress for nearly a thousand years. In the early ages it held the outlets



of the main passes between Hungary and the north—a Turin or a Verona of the East. Often these old mountain citadels have been hardly used by the modern world; railways have shunned them, the route which made their fame has been left to gypsies and foot travellers, and the once famous fort stands like an empty sentry-box at the gate of a dismantled palace. But Przemyśl had never lost its value. Its first modern forts were begun in 1871; it was enlarged in 1887, when there was a prospect of trouble with Russia; it was rebuilt in 1896; and was fully brought up to date in 1909. It was the first of Austria's defensive schemes against an eastern invader. The fortress owed its modern importance to its situation astride the railways. The main trunk line between Cracow and Lemberg had been bent round so that it ran through the *enceinte*. It was true that there were routes independent of Przemyśl. The armies of the Donajetz could draw their supplies from Lemberg and Kiev either by way of Jaroslav and Rava Russka on the north, or by the southern line which skirted the Carpathians *viâ* Jaslo, Sanok, and Stryj. But these were only makeshifts. The trunk line was by way of Tarnow, Jaroslav, Przemyśl, and Lemberg, and with Przemyśl in the enemy's hands the trunk line was useless. Supplies had to make a laborious detour to north or south, and such an encumbrance meant much to Russia, when every hour and every man counted. The situation of Przemyśl did not make it an ideal ring fortress. The heights were insufficiently isolated, and on the north-eastern side there was the widening plain of the San. The city lay on the right bank of that river, which was crossed by two road bridges and one railway bridge. Round it, at a distance of about a thousand yards, was a strong system of inner lines. Beyond this there was an intermediate circle of forts, mostly small, and beyond these again, at a distance of about six miles from the city, a circle of outer forts, consisting of nine main works, with numerous smaller connecting *fortins*. The distance between these forts was not regular, but depended upon the nature of the ground. Przemyśl was defended, therefore, like Liège or Namur, its first line being the great forts themselves, and not, like Verdun, the far-flung trenches of a field army. Had Russia been well supplied with siege artillery its fall would have been assured in the first month.

When Lemberg fell in the beginning of September part of Auffenberg's army took refuge in Przemyśl, and the numbers of the invested were increased by the *débâcle* of Rava Russka a

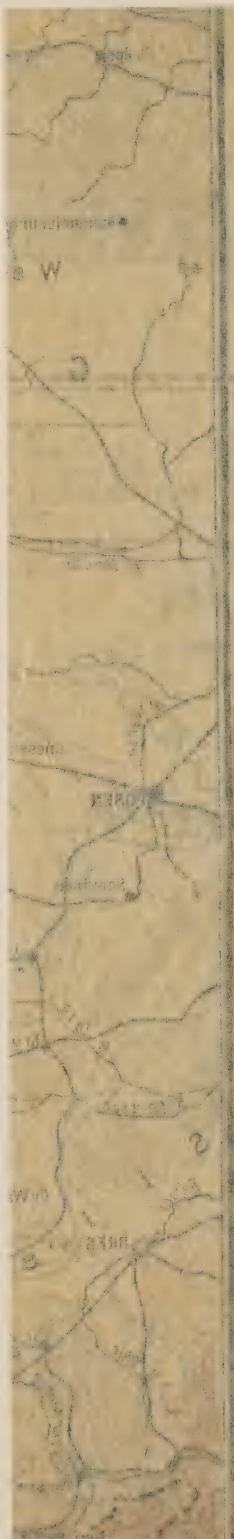
fortnight later. The place in normal times had some 50,000 inhabitants, mostly Jews, and this total must have been increased by refugees from the surrounding country. The bulk of four Austrian army corps were now inside, and the total must have been over 200,000 souls. Provisions had not been collected on any great scale, and by the middle of October starvation was within sight. Then came the first assault of Hindenburg upon Warsaw, when Ivanov retired behind the San, and by 15th October the investment had been broken. All the west and north of the city was open, and remained so until, Hindenburg being in full retreat, the Austrian left had to retire westward to conform. Przemysl, therefore, had leisure to prepare for the second and grimmer blockade. It was known that large supplies of food and ammunition had been brought in; it was believed that most of the Austrian population had been sent out; and when the ring closed round it about 12th November, even the Russian General Staff assumed that whatever man could foresee in the way of defence had been prepared. The astonishing thing is that nothing had been done—nothing that touched the heart of the question. Austrian strategy in all that concerned Przemysl was bewildering in its incompetence. Why, to begin with, was so great a point made of its defence? Its possession meant much to Russia, but more in the way of convenience than stark necessity. It did not block completely her communications or veto finally her movements against the passes. Nor did it give Austria any conspicuous advantage worth the seclusion of so large a force. Verdun was worth an army to France; Przemysl to Austria was not the equivalent of a corps. This was the view of the Russian Staff, and the event proved them right. But if Austria thought fit to hold it at all costs, why were not the means proportioned to the end? Kusmanek, the commandant of the fortress, was a man just over fifty, a commander, apparently, of fair ability, as the Austrian army went, but of a foresight even lower than the Austrian average. He did not propose to hold the place with a field army in outer entrenchments; he guessed rightly that Russia could not easily batter down the first line of works; and for the purpose which he set himself 50,000 men were ample. Instead of that, he crowded inside the twenty-five miles perimeter something like 150,000, and part of these were cavalry! In short, he kept the same garrison as had blown in by accident in September after Auffenberg's misfortunes. Those who had sought Przemysl for sanctuary were retained for its



GENERAL MAP OF THE RUSSIAN FRONT.  
(Facing p. 536.)



GENERAL MAP OF THE RUSSIAN FRONT.  
(Scale 1:500,000)





defence, in spite of their unwieldy numbers and inferior quality. Moreover, he kept most of the civilian population. All that was done in the days of respite was to bring in food and shells—as if food or shells by themselves were a sufficient bulwark. Kusmanek, with a personal staff of seventy-five, seems to have regarded Przemyśl as ideal winter quarters, and to have settled down to the siege under the impression that long before the ample commissariat was curtailed relief would have come. The chance given him in late October was neglected. The defence from the first was at the mercy of its own mismanagement, and passed from blunder to blunder. The Russian army of investment had nothing to do but to wait on the certain consequences of their opponents' folly.

Yet there was a moment when relief came very near. General Selivanov had never more than a small force, and little heavy artillery. By the middle of December, it will be remembered, Ivanov had to fall back from Cracow, as the Austrian attack across the passes uncovered his left flank. On 15th December the Austrians held the Galician debouchments of the Dukla and Lupkow Passes, and were in Sanok itself, not thirty miles from Przemyśl. Selivanov's position was full of peril. The Austrians coming through the passes were conversing by means of searchlights with the Austrians in the fortress. The enemy's guns sounded on both sides of the Russian lines. It was the chance for a successful sortie, and on 15th December the sortie came. Five Magyar infantry regiments broke through at the south-west angle, and pushed fifteen miles beyond the outer lines to Bireoza, on the Sanok road. For four days the issue hung in the balance. Selivanov brought reinforcements from another segment, and drove back the sortie with a loss of 3,000 killed, wounded, and prisoners. The more dangerous pressure from the south was presently relieved by Brussilov, who cleared the mouth of the passes, and by Christmas Day had restored the safety of the Russian flank.

Thereafter stagnation set in. The Russians perfected their position, and by means of light railways secured great mobility round the whole circumference. There were no more sorties by the garrison, but an enormous expenditure of ammunition, mainly fruitless. The town itself was never shelled, and its streets showed none of the ordinary siege casualties. But they showed something worse, for famine began to stalk through them, since the provisions laid in in October could not maintain the motley

multitude in the *enceinte*. The officers of the Przemysl defence treated the siege as a business in which at all costs their health and comfort must be protected, though it is hard to see what purpose this protection served, for they were singularly supine. They insisted on leading their ordinary lives of cafés and heavy meals, while their men were fainting from starvation in the streets. There were exceptions, of course, especially among the Hungarian Honvéd regiments, who meant business; but the conduct of Kusmanek and his staff remains one of the ugly episodes of the war.

On the night of 13th March the end began. The village of Malkovice, in the north-west segment, on the line to Jaroslav, was carried by a Russian assault. This meant that the outer line of the defence had been successfully breached. The Russians fortified the ground they had captured, and began a bombardment of a section of the inner circle. Four days later, on the night of the 18th, the garrison attempted a last sortie, which failed. Very early on the morning of the 22nd, the Russian lines heard the noise of many explosions. Kusmanek was busy at purposes of destruction, and this he performed with an assiduity unknown in his other methods of defence. About nine o'clock the Austrian Chief of Staff arrived at Russian headquarters. He brought a letter from Kusmanek, which ran: "In consequence of the exhaustion of the provisions and stores, and in compliance with instructions received from my supreme chief, I am compelled to surrender the Imperial and Royal Fortress of Przemysl to the Imperial Russian Army." A few Russian officers proceeded to the Austrian headquarters and received the surrender, but there was no formal and triumphal entry. The new Russian military governor took charge of the evacuation, sending off prisoners at the rate of 10,000 a day, and making provision for the feeding of those who remained.

The fall of Przemysl was not a Russian achievement so much as an Austrian disgrace. It fell by its own momentum like an overripe fruit. Selivanov had only to bide his time for Kusmanek to do his work for him. We cannot, therefore, compare it with any of the great sieges of history—with Lille, or Paris, or Port Arthur; for it was no case of a strife of inflexible wills and an issue determined by overmastering skill or strength. Nor was its fall a matter of prime strategical importance. Her success freed Russia from a menace, improved her railway communications, and gave her a good northern base against the central Carpathian

passes. But the real gain was the release of Selivanov's army for an active offensive. To observers in the West at the time it appeared that Hindenburg had now shot his bolt, and that it was Russia's turn to advance. They underestimated alike the essential weakness of Russia and the boldness and efficiency of the German Eastern Command. For at the moment Hindenburg and his staff were devising a mighty stroke, destined to sweep the Russian armies eastward like leaves in the wind, and to make their recent hard-won victories seem a far-away, meaningless tale.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### NEUVE CHAPELLE.

*8th-15th March.*

The Purpose of Neuve Chapelle—The Use of Artillery—The Battle—  
Its Consequences.

IN the early stages of a campaign certain actions are fought which seem at first sight of small importance. Their scale is such that they would scarcely be noticed among the great battles of the close. They are affairs of corps rather than of armies, of divisions, even of battalions. But they are none the less epoch-making, for they represent the first step in an experiment which may control the future policy of the war. Of such a type was the engagement at Neuve Chapelle, into which the British army entered on 10th March. It was intended by Sir John French as a local enterprise to prepare the way for the great combined assault of the summer. He had collected a modest reserve of ammunition, and by dint of raking together every spare gun from the whole of his front he hoped to explore the possibilities of the new method of artillery "preparation" which the French had already tried in Champagne. He did not expect to inflict a decisive blow; rather he wished to test the value of tactics which seemed both to him and to Joffre the true ones to break down the German defence, and to practise his troops and his Staff in the type of action which promised to be the staple. The Dardanelles expedition, from the policy of which he profoundly differed, was beginning, and he was anxious for a success in the West which should concentrate public attention on what he regarded as the main battle-ground.

The Allied front in Flanders and northern France was by the beginning of March little changed from its position in November. On the Yser the floods were ebbing, for the German howitzers had broken the dams near Nieuport which held them up, and by



the middle of March troops could cross the meadows between the railway line and the canal. South from Dixmude to the point of the Ypres Salient lay French troops, relieved at intervals by British cavalry. The southern re-entrant was held by the new British corps, the 5th, under Major-General Sir Herbert Plumer, and south of them, behind Wytschaete and Messines, lay the 2nd Corps. Pulteney's 3rd Corps was in its old position astride the Lys, in front of Armentières, and south of it from Estaires to west of Neuve Chapelle was Sir Henry Rawlinson's 4th Corps. The Indian Corps continued the line towards Givenchy, where the 1st Corps carried it across the canal and linked up with Maud'huy's Tenth Army. Maud'huy had greatly improved his position by small successes on the ridge of Notre Dame de Lorette, west of Lens, but his line in its main features was that which he had so stubbornly held in late October. But while the front remained the same the Allied forces had been largely augmented. In November Major-General Davies' 8th Division had arrived to complete the 4th Corps. Early in January the 5th Corps had been constituted under Sir Herbert Plumer, its two divisions being numbered the 27th and 28th, to allow of the new service divisions at home coming in between. These divisions were largely composed of men brought back from tropical stations, who were highly tried by the abrupt transition to a Flemish winter. In February a Canadian division, under Major-General Alderson, arrived, and by the beginning of March there were more Territorial divisions with Sir John French than there had been Territorial battalions in November. The British force had been organized in two armies under the Commander-in-Chief: the First Army, commanded by Sir Douglas Haig, embracing the 1st, 4th, and Indian Corps, and holding the line from La Bassée to Estaires; and the Second Army, commanded by General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, continuing the front to the Ypres Salient, and including the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Corps. It was still the day of comparatively small things, but it is instructive to remember that the British under Marlborough were rarely more than a division strong; that at Waterloo we had a division and a half; that at our strongest in the Peninsula we had no more than one modern army corps; that in the Crimea we had less than the strength of two divisions of to-day; and that at the full tide of the South African War we had under a quarter of a million men. March saw a British army assembled on the Flemish borders twelve times as large as that which had triumphed under Wellington in the Peninsula, and

fifty-five times greater than the force which charged with King Harry at Agincourt.

It had been decided as early as the middle of February that an action should be staged to test a new theory of attack. If a sufficiently powerful artillery fire were accumulated upon a section of the front, parapet and barbed wire entanglements could be blown to pieces, and if the artillery, lengthening its range, were able to put a barrage of fire between the enemy and his supports, the infantry could advance in comparative safety. To ensure the success of such a plan complete secrecy was necessary, and for a surprise the British were in an advantageous position. The ascendancy in air work which they had exhibited made it difficult for a German airplane to show its nose over their lines without being promptly hunted back, while their own airmen were able to make reconnaissances over the German front, and determine where it was most weakly held.

The section chosen for the British attempt was the village of Neuve Chapelle. It will be remembered that on 16th October Smith-Dorrien's 2nd Corps took the village, and next day advanced as far as Aubers and Herlies, and on the 19th took the hamlet of Le Pilly, three and a half miles east of Neuve Chapelle, a position which was the farthest won in this neighbourhood. The German counter-attack pushed us back to just east of Neuve Chapelle, and on 27th October they recaptured the place, so that by the beginning of November we had fallen back to a line well to the west of the village. There we remained during the winter months. The German lines covered the village, and the British front ran from Givenchy by Festubert, just east of Richebourg, just west of Neuve Chapelle, and then north-east by Fauquissart and Bois-Grenier to east of Armentières. It will be seen that our line between La Bassée and Neuve Chapelle represented a re-entrant which might profitably be straightened. It was not so dangerous an angle as that at St. Eloi, south of Ypres; but in the Neuve Chapelle section the war had long languished, and the enemy was less on his guard than in the old cockpit of the Ypres ridges.

Looking eastward from the British front, Neuve Chapelle showed a long, straggling line of houses among gardens, with a tall white church standing conspicuous over the flats. As studied in one of the photographs which airplanes obtained from above, one main highroad was revealed running north from La Bassée to Estaires. At Neuve Chapelle a second road left this, and went by Fleurbaix to Armentières, and a connecting road joined the

two and formed a diamond-shaped figure, in the west angle of which the village lay. The houses straggled round the road junction, those on the east being small and crowded together, and those on the west larger and surrounded by gardens and orchards. At the northern apex of the diamond was a small triangle, bounded by roads and filled with plots and hedgerows. Between the houses and the La Bassée road on the west were meadows and ploughland, where lay the German trenches, our own being about a hundred yards westward, close along the highway.

To appreciate the strategic importance of Neuve Chapelle, we must continue our survey to the east. Two miles south-west of Lille a low but clearly marked ridge began, which ran to the village of Fournes, Smith-Dorrien's old October objective. At Fournes it split into two, one following the main La Bassée road to Illies, the other running west to Haut Pommereau and then bending north-east to Aubers and Fromelles. The top of these ridges was a low plateau, which, once won, would command the approaches to Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and the cities of the plain of the Scheldt. A small river, the Des Layes, flowed between Neuve Chapelle and the ridges. This stream crossed the La Bassée highway south of Neuve Chapelle at a place which we called Port Arthur, and was crossed to the north-east by three roads, which ran towards the ridges from the Neuve Chapelle-Armentières highway. Along the stream lay the German second line of defence, with strong positions at the bridgeheads and a mile north-east of the village at the Pietre Mill, whose tall chimney was one of the landmarks of the place. A considerable wood, mainly of saplings, the Bois du Biez, lay south-east of Neuve Chapelle, on the left bank of the Des Layes, and another, the Bois de Pommereau, clothed the ridge south of Aubers. Obviously if the attack could be pushed so far as to carry the second German position, the ridge would be won, the La Bassée-Lille line threatened, and, if fortune were kind, Lille itself rendered untenable.

On 8th March Sir John French assembled his corps commanders and expounded to them the plan of attack. The assault of Neuve Chapelle was to be undertaken by the First Army, the 4th Corps operating on the north and the Indian Corps on the south. In order to keep the enemy occupied, and prevent him from sending reinforcements, two supplementary attacks were arranged on the flanks of the main movement—the 1st Corps attacking from Givenchy, and the 3rd Corps from the Second Army attacking just south of Armentières. The scheme, which had been worked

out by General John Gough, Haig's Chief of Staff, before his untimely death, was as prudent as it was bold; but it made high demands on our artillery, and it was to some extent at the mercy of accident. It involved an artillery bombardment four times greater than anything we had yet undertaken. First, the enemy's trenches and entanglements must be destroyed; then with a lengthened range a curtain of fire must be hung between him and his supports. To achieve this the staff work must be precise and efficient. The infantry must advance at the right moment, neither sooner nor later; for if they were too soon they would run into our own fire, or would find the enemy's defences unbroken, and if they were too late the crushing effect of the bombardment would be lost. No plan ever works out quite as it is intended, and it might be necessary to modify some parts. Close communication must be kept up between the infantry and the gunners far behind them. Dispatch-bearers were too slow, and telephonic communication was apt to be destroyed in a bombardment, while if there should be fog the difficulty would be increased. Everything depended upon the artillery observers and upon the effective co-ordination of the different units by the divisional staffs. So far as surprise went, that could be made certain. We could catch the enemy unawares, thanks to the brilliance of our air work. But whether we should merely straighten our line, or drive a deep wedge into the German front which would threaten Lille, depended upon the thousand chances of battle which no human staff could completely foresee.

Very quietly during the 8th and 9th our artillery was brought together into a small area west of Neuve Chapelle. Every variety of gun was there—field gun, field howitzer, 60-pounder, coast defence gun, and the new heavy howitzer, which was our answer to Krupp and Skoda. The main field artillery positions were just west of Richebourg, while the heavy guns were around La Couture and Vieille Chapelle. From ten o'clock on the evening of the 9th the infantry assembled in the March night. Every trench and ditch was full of them, masses of expectant men waiting on the order for the long-delayed advance. Hot meals were served out along the line, and, like the soldiers of the Revolution, they had hot coffee before sunrise. Then came a period of tense silence. Waiting under arms is a nervous business at the best, and doubly trying was such waiting as this, with the unconscious enemy a hundred yards away, and all hell leashed in the great guns behind. Down the line from Armentières to La Bassée



there was the same eager anticipation. The men and the company officers did not know when the main attack was to be launched. All they knew was that they were on the eve of a great movement.

Dawn on the 10th broke grey and sullen. The clouds hung low in the sky, and there was mist in the distance. The first light seems to have shown the Germans that something was astir in the British line. The trenches were full of men, so ran the reports of the outposts; but the corps commander took no steps. Then suddenly on the anxious ear of our troops fell the boom of guns. It was our artillery firing "ranging" shots. Then all was silent again, and from Armentières to Givenchy battalion commanders looked at their watches. At 7.30, punctually to a second, the silence was torn by a pandemonium of sound, a new thing in the experience of the British army. It split the ears and rent the heavens, so that the troops, crouching under cover, were dazed and maddened by the brain-racking concussions. Sometimes, when a gun trajectory was low, a shell passed close over their heads. Sometimes, when the big howitzers fired, the shells rose to the altitude of a high mountain before descending on the doomed German trenches. The discharges were so rapid and incessant that they sounded as if they came from some supernatural machine gun. The earth vibrated as if struck by a great hammer. The first shells that hit the German position raised a mighty cloud of smoke and dust, and for the next thirty-five minutes we could see nothing but a pall of green lyddite fumes and great mushrooms of red earth. Barbed-wire entanglements were sliced through, parapets—the work of months—were crumbled like sand castles, and horrible fragments of mortality blew back upon us with the lyddite wreaths. Four shells to the yard was our ration of fire, and in this action there was more use of artillery than in a year and a half of the South African War. The "preparation" lasted thirty-five minutes, and at the end of it there were no German front trenches—only a welter of earth and dust and mangled bodies. At five minutes past eight our gunners lengthened their range, and the houses of the village began to leap into the air. Huge dust spouts went up to heaven; trees were razed like grass before a scythe; and the cloud grew denser with the debris of brick and mortar. Then the whistles blew along the line. The time had come for the infantry to advance.

Due west of Neuve Chapelle lay two brigades of the 8th Division—the 23rd to the left and the 25th on the right. South of them, on a front a mile and a half long, was the Meerut Division,

with the Lahore Division behind in close support. On the left was the Garhwal Brigade, with the Dehra Dun Brigade on its right. The first attack was carried out by the 23rd against the north-east corner of Neuve Chapelle, the 25th against the village, and the Garhwal Brigade against the south-west corner. The 25th had no difficulty with the trenches opposite them. Dazed and dying Germans were the only enemy left, though a machine gun or two still kept up fire from concealed positions, and there was much sniping. Our artillery bombardment continued, and it was not till 8.35 that the range was again lengthened, in order to interpose a curtain of fire between the village and the German supports. Then the two battalions of the 25th Brigade swept into the battered streets, in which every German was soon dead or captured. What had once been a village was now only a rubbish heap. The church was a broken shard, and the churchyard, horribly ploughed up with our fire, showed those long dead in their graves. The ground was yellow with lyddite, the fruit trees and the oaks were torn up by the roots, and over the desolation in the churchyard and at the cross-roads loomed two gaunt crucifixes, which by some miracle had escaped destruction to point an ironic moral.

The attack on the right by the Garhwal Brigade was at first no less successful. It easily carried the first trenches, and swept on to the Bois du Biez, past the heap of wayside ruins which was once the hamlet of Port Arthur. But on the left of the attack there was a different story. There the artillery preparation had been insufficient, and in the northern corner of Neuve Chapelle, where there was a slight hollow, the German trenches and barbed-wire entanglements were still intact. Here the 23rd Brigade advanced, and the 2nd Scottish Rifles—the old Cameronians, who had on their regimental rolls Lord Hill, Lord Wolseley, and Sir Evelyn Wood—came up against unbroken wire and a storm of shot from rifles and machine guns. The splendid battalion never wavered. They tore at the wire with naked hands, but were compelled to fall back and lie in the fire-swept open till one company got through a gap and broke down the defence. They lost fifteen officers, including their gallant commander, and few regiments have lived through a more dreadful hour. Scarcely less terrible was the ordeal of the 2nd Middlesex on their right. They, too, were mown down by machine guns in the open, and faced with wire. A message was sent back to the gunners, and the Middlesex waited in that zone of death till our shells had destroyed the entanglements.

Meantime the success of the 25th Brigade to the south had turned the flank of the Germans north of the village, and presently the whole 23rd Brigade had struggled through to the orchard north-east of Neuve Chapelle, where they joined hands with the 24th Brigade, which had attacked on their left from the Neuve Chapelle-Armentières highway. By midday our artillery isolated the village with a curtain of shrapnel fire. No German counter-attack was possible, for no reinforcements could pierce that screen, and our men had leisure to secure the ground they had won.

Now was the moment, while the enemy were still stupid with surprise, and demoralized by the awful bombardment of the morning, and while our own men were hot with victory, to push on and carry the ridge which dominated the road to Lille. But the scheme had not gone as smoothly as was hoped. All telephonic communications had been cut by our own and the enemy's fire, and it was hard to get orders quickly to the first line. The check of the 23rd Brigade had put the whole movement out of gear, and our front needed serious adjustment. Mistakes had been made. "I am of opinion," Sir John French wrote in his dispatch, "that this delay would not have occurred had the clearly expressed orders of the general officer commanding the First Army been more carefully observed." There was also an unaccountable delay in bringing the reserve brigades of the 4th Corps into action. It was not till 3.30 in the afternoon that on the left of the 24th Brigade there formed up the three brigades of the 7th Division—the 20th, 21st, and 22nd, who had won for themselves immortal glory in the October battle round Ypres. The left of the attack now swung south, moving towards Aubers by the hamlet of Pietre. Simultaneously from the south the Indian Corps—the Garhwal and the Dehra Dun Brigades—pushed toward the ridge through the Bois du Biez. But everywhere they met with difficulties. The Garhwal Brigade, on the south, came upon a German position unbroken by artillery, and carried it only with desperate losses. While it established itself on this new line, the Dehra Dun Brigade, supported by the Jullundur Brigade of the Lahore Division, attacked farther to the south, but were held up on the line of the river Des Layes by a German outpost at the bridge. Haig brought up the 1st Brigade from the 1st Corps to support, but darkness fell before they arrived. Farther to the left on our front another fortified bridge over the stream held up the 25th Brigade, while the 24th was checked by machine-gun fire from the cross-roads north-west of Pietre village, and the 7th Division by the line of

the Des Layes and the defence of the Pietre Mill. Everywhere in this neighbourhood were strong positions which our artillery had not yet touched, and to push an infantry attack was needless sacrifice. Accordingly, as the grey evening closed in, we devoted ourselves to strengthening our line on the ground we had won. Neuve Chapelle was ours; we had advanced a mile; and we had fully straightened our line. But the wedge had still to be driven into the enemy.

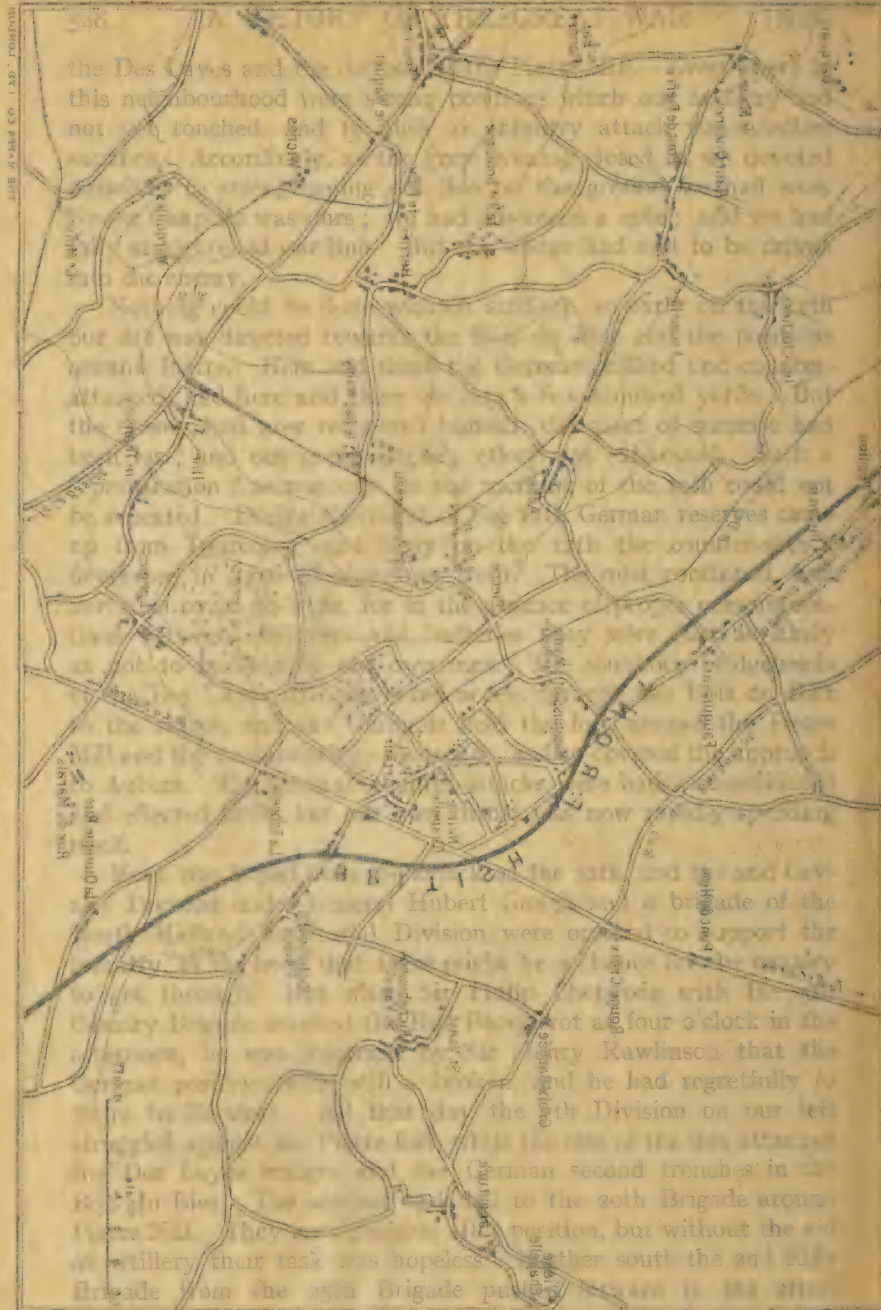
Nothing could be done without artillery, so early on the 11th our fire was directed towards the Bois du Biez and the positions around Pietre. Here and there the Germans rallied and counter-attacked, and here and there we won a few hundred yards. But the enemy had now recovered himself, the asset of surprise had been lost, and our great artillery effort was exhausted. Such a "preparation" as was seen on the morning of the 10th could not be repeated. During the night of the 11th German reserves came up from Tourcoing, and early on the 12th the counter-attack developed in force all along our front. The mist continued, and our guns could do little, for in the absence of proper communications between observers and batteries they were just as likely as not to be shelling our own men. The stubborn bridgeheads of the Des Layes still prevented access through the Bois du Biez to the ridges, and the Germans held the fort around the Pietre Mill and the neighbouring cross-roads, and so covered the approach to Aubers. The German counter-attacks were badly co-ordinated and effected little, but our own thrust was now rapidly spending itself.

Much was hoped from the attack on the 12th, and the 2nd Cavalry Division under General Hubert Gough and a brigade of the North Midland Territorial Division were ordered to support the infantry, in the hope that there might be a chance for the cavalry to get through. But when Sir Philip Chetwode with the 5th Cavalry Brigade reached the Rue Bacquerot at four o'clock in the afternoon, he was informed by Sir Henry Rawlinson that the German positions were still unbroken, and he had regretfully to retire to Estaires. All that day the 7th Division on our left struggled against the Pietre fort, while the rest of the line attacked the Des Layes bridges and the German second trenches in the Bois du Biez. The hardest task fell to the 20th Brigade around Pietre Mill. They took position after position, but without the aid of artillery their task was hopeless. Farther south the 2nd Rifle Brigade from the 25th Brigade pushed forward in the after-





MEULE CHVÆBEGGE



(Facing p. 248)

noon, and managed to carry a section of the German second trenches. But enfilading fire made their position untenable, and they were compelled to fall back on their old lines.

By the evening of the 12th it was clear that a stalemate had been reached. We could not win to the German position commanding the ridge, and they could not retake Neuve Chapelle. "As most of the objects for which the operation had been undertaken had been attained," Sir John French wrote, "and as there were reasons why I considered it inadvisable to continue the attack at that time, I directed Sir Douglas Haig on the night of the 12th to hold and consolidate the ground which had been gained by the 4th and Indian Corps, and to suspend further offensive operations for the present." Many of the German trenches were destroyed by shell fire, many had been turned in to make graves, so all the 13th was spent by our weary troops in digging themselves into the wet meadows along the Des Layes. By the 14th the two corps which had fought the action had been withdrawn into reserve.

The most severe counter-attack was not at Neuve Chapelle but fifteen miles north, where the village of St. Eloi stood on the southern ridge of Ypres. On the 14th of March, when the mists lay thick on the flats, the Germans concentrated a mass of artillery against the section held by the 27th Division. The village, which lay along the Ypres-Armentières road, was the point of that dangerous southern re-entrant to the Ypres Salient which had been fought for so fiercely in the great October battle. At five in the afternoon a heavy bombardment began, and at the same moment two mines were exploded beneath a mound which was part of our front, to the south-east of the village. A fierce infantry attack followed, with the result that our men were forced out of their trenches. This led to the enfilading of the troops to the right and left, and the whole section of the British front fell back. Then came darkness, and under its cover we prepared our counter-stroke. It was delivered about 2 a.m. on the 15th by the 82nd Brigade, with the 80th Brigade in support. The former drove the enemy out of the village of St. Eloi, and retook part of the trenches to the east, while the latter completed the work, and by daybreak we had recovered all the lost ground which was of material importance. In this action Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry especially distinguished themselves, the first of the overseas troops to be engaged in an action of first-rate importance. Their deeds were a pride to the whole Empire—a pride soon to be



infinitely heightened by the glorious record of the Canadian Division in the desperate battles of April.

The attack on Neuve Chapelle was supported by a variety of movements along the British front to prevent any sudden massing of reinforcements. On the morning of the 10th the 1st Corps attacked from Givenchy; but there had been too little artillery preparation, the wire entanglements were largely uncut, and the most they could do was to hold the enemy to his position. On the 12th the 2nd Corps had arranged to advance south-west of Wytshaete against that troublesome German position on the ridge which we had assailed in December. It was timed for ten in the morning, but the mists hung so low that it was not till four in the afternoon that the 7th Brigade could move. The mist thickened, darkness drew near, and the attack had to be relinquished. More successful was the attack the same day on the hamlet of L'Épinette, south-east of Armentières. At noon the 17th Brigade of the 4th Division of the 3rd Corps, with the 18th Brigade in support, advanced 300 yards on a front of half a mile, carried the village, and held it against all counter-attacks. Our artillery also succeeded on the 10th in shelling the railway station of Quesnoy, east of Armentières, where some German reinforcements were entraining; and the fire of our great howitzers penetrated as far as Aubers on the ridge, where a tall church tower dissolved in a cloud of dust. But the chief success in these subsidiary operations was won by our airmen. During the three days from the 10th to the 12th of March the weather was the worst conceivable for air work, and aviators were compelled to fly at a height of no more than 100 or 150 feet to make sure of their aim. One dropped a bomb on the bridge at Menin which carried the railway over the Lys, and destroyed one of the piers; others wrecked the railway stations at Courtrai, Don, and Douai; and bombs were dropped on Lille, hitting one of the German headquarters. This whole air campaign was brilliantly conceived and executed. To destroy vital points in the enemy's communications was as effective as a shrapnel curtain to bar him from his reserves.

One result of Neuve Chapelle was to convince the British army that they were facing an unbeaten enemy. When the defence rallied, it fought with desperate valour, aided by its many machine guns—there were fifteen on one stretch of 250 yards. It showed admirable discipline, and handled its reserves with bold-



ness and precision. In the mind of the German people the affair produced a curious exasperation. "It is not war, it is murder," was the verdict passed on the British use of artillery by the nation which had accumulated gigantic reserves of shell and had already used heavy guns to prepare an action in a way unknown to history. Considered as a battle by itself, it was for the British a Pyrrhic victory. On a front of three miles they had advanced more than a mile, and the former sag in their line was now replaced by a pronounced sag in the enemy's. But the cost had been high, and the losses of the defence were probably not greater than those of the attack. The result, in Cromwell's words, was not "answerable to the honesty and simplicity of the design," and the British reach had notably exceeded its grasp. This was partly due to accident—the sudden clouding of the weather from 10th to 12th March. But there were also many grave blunders, which proved that our organization was still far from adequate for a serious offensive. The artillery preparation was patchy; the staff work as a whole, and especially that of the 4th Corps, was imperfect; and there was an unexplained delay in bringing up the brigades of the 7th Division after the advance of the 8th on the morning of 10th March. The observation work of the artillery was faulty, with the result that occasionally our own advancing troops were shelled, and more often the enemy's position was left unbroken. It was our first attempt at the new tactics, and inevitably we fumbled. Sir John French laid the chief blame for the result upon the lack of ammunition. But in making his plans he must have foreseen this, for the new British factories were not yet producing at full power, and he had accumulated a reserve which he thought sufficient for the experiment. He had not unnaturally miscalculated the strength required to effect his purpose.

Neuve Chapelle was a test action, and the deduction from it was to have a sinister effect on the Allies' conduct of the war. For both to the British themselves and to the French Staff, who looked on with the liveliest interest, it appeared that, after making all allowances for inexperience and blunders, the new plan was justified. Guns could blast a way for infantry through the strongest defences. Clearly the attack must be on a broader front, otherwise the avenue of advance would be too narrow and degenerate into a salient; but on a broad front, granted limitless supplies of guns and shell, it seemed that success was assured. This view, as we shall see, dominated all the plans for 1915,

and its many weaknesses were left undiscovered in the obsession which had fallen upon the Allied commands. More serious was the fact that it ossified the study of tactics, and turned the war for long into a contest less of brains than of blind material force. A false step had been taken which for three years was to be left unretrieved.

END OF VOLUME I.







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